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GRISELDA.



GRISELDA

A Tragedy :

AND OTHER POEMS.

By EDWIN ARNOLD,

AUTHOR OF

"POEMS, NARRATIVE AND LYRICAL."

LONDON :

DAVID BOGUE, 86 FLEET STREET.

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GRISELDA.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

WALTER	<i>Marquis of Saluzzo.</i>
PIETRO MALA	<i>One of his Councillors.</i>
JANICOLA	<i>Father of Griselda.</i>
BERTOLO	<i>Head-falconer to the Marquis.</i>
ANTONIO	<i>A Lord in waiting.</i>
BERTRAM	<i>A Troubadour.</i>
MARTINO	<i>A Sergeant of the Guard.</i>
GRISELDA	<i>Daughter of Janicola.</i>
THE PRINCE }	{ <i>Children of Griselda and the</i>
THE PRINCESS }	
LENETTE	<i>A Village Friend of Griselda.</i>
JACINTA	<i>A Waiting-woman.</i>

Courtiers, Attendants, &c.

SCENE.—*Saluzzo, at the foot of the Italian Alps.*

TIME.—*Thirteenth Century.*

GRISELDA.

ACT I.

SCENE I.

The MARQUIS alone, in an apartment of the Palace.

Enter BERTOLO.

BERTOLO.

Wilt please you, good my lord, bestride your steed?
He stamps for starting, and the hawks are out;
We marked three crested herons overnight
By San Dalmazzo; and to grace the sport,
April hath borrowed from her sister May
The brightest dawn she brags of; not a cloud
Will cool the quarry's tired wing to-day.

MARQUIS.

The sun is forth, thou sayest ?

BERTOLO.

Golden and broad,

Dyeing the white mist, crimson : Wilt thou ride ?

Bruno and Lupa strain to take the field.

MARQUIS.

Leash up the dogs again, and lead them in ;

I will not ride.

BERTOLO.

My liege, the hounds are hot ;

The Barbary stallion will forget his feet ;

Shall we not breathe him ?

MARQUIS.

Lead them back, I say !

It fits my humour to be idle now ;
Lead back. And, Bertolo,—I prithee tarry ;
I had a thing to say :—wert thou not held
As keen a falconer as Sicil had ?

BERTOLO.

My liege, I think I was. I do remember
When Siracusa's king came to his crown,
We had a field-day, flying at the brook,
And every lady brought her hooded hawk
With bells and jesses ; but in flights fifteen,
Old Beppo—'t was my grey king-falcon,—strook
Ten of the long-bills dead. The king he laughed,
And shook his beard, and swore 't was a brave bird,
And asked me thrice if that mine art could teach
A king to strike as soon, and stoop as sure.

MARQUIS.

'Tis a rare bird the falcon.

BERTOLO.

My good lord,

He hath a wing will bear him through the thunder—
An eye more steady than the sun can turn,—
A heart, to broach it on the heron's bill,
And never blench ; and when he strikes, he strikes
Once and for all.

MARQUIS.

Tell me, good Bertolo,

What if such falcon in his mid ascent
Should stoop away to chase a silly dove,
How wouldst thou hold him back ?

BERTOLO.

Marry ! the call

Brings him to glove.

MARQUIS.

How if he will not heed ?

BERTOLO.

Then must the silken jesses, and the hood,
Keep his hot folly down, and curb his flight.

MARQUIS.

Nay! but resolve me this:—if he shall scorn
The silken jesses, and the call, and hood,
To follow meaner fowl, how say'st thou then?

BERTOLO.

'T were pity of his life, but he should die!
For it were past doubt that his heart would taint
With taste of meaner blood than royal birds'.

MARQUIS.

Aye! there were peril of it! Thou sayest well.
Leave me alone,—mew up the hawks again;
I will not ride to-day. [*Erit* BERTOLO.]

He reads me not,

I am that royal falcon, and the dove
Is a most lowly lady. Ah! the day

I saw her at the hawking, all my heart
Broke from its jesses towards her, and what lure
Will bring the tassel-gentle back to me?
Why fair being low, or wherefore low being fair?
For now between thy beauty and my love,
Cometh this little crown, by whose scant breadth
I, being higher, may not stoop to thee,
Nor thou reach unto me. Lady of Grace!
Her quiet lip's light touch were like a rose-leaf;
And I, who would have had it here, on mine,
Must take it, if I take it, on this hand,
Most monarch-like, but most unlovingly:
Her clear blue eye, where hath Saluzzo such?
Her soft, smooth braids that bridle up and down
Over her neck, like on a field of snow
Bright birds new lit. Ah! beauty, rich and rare,
If thou be casket to a mind like thee,
There were a piece of quaint and perfect work
Worthy a monarch's winning. By my life!
I'd stoop to win it, though it cost a crown.
And I do think, and so the village saith,

That out of this fair house, the inner soul,
Shining, doth make it bright. Grant it but so!
If she be wise and good, patient and true,
Are not these virtues for a queen to wear,
And for a king to wed? On such a brow
Would not the royal gems sit royally,
And bear their glitter bravest? Aye, they shall!
I know my people have a prayer to me
This very matin, touching on the need
Of some young forehead to receive the crown;
And even now they come. E'en let them come.
If they shall press me hard, I'll be advised,
For smoothly goes the suit whose arbiter
Before he hears determines.

Enter Nobles, Courtiers, &c.

Signors, welcome!

What weighty purpose brings ye from your dreams
Before the day is certain of the sun?

ANTONIO.

A suit, my liege.

MARQUIS.

Doth it touch aught of mine ?

ANTONIO.

It toucheth thee, the court, the country-side,
Most nearly, good my lord.

MARQUIS.

Let it have words ;
It should be something wise if white beards wag
To give it utterance. Thou, Pietro Mala,
Tell out the message : I am set to hear.

PIETRO MALA.

My liege, not that we are not overblessed,—
Not that we are not well content and glad,—
Not that the land is not a land of plenty,
Bring we these anxious faces to thy throne ;
For over all the fields a sea of grain
Floats like new gold, and the green berries swing
And swell to purple in the summer sun :

Our boys are brave and lusty, and our girls
Comely and straight; and in their hamlet-homes
No lack is known of music or of mirth,—
Such mirth as marketh holiday in hearts,
Such music as in merry laughter rings:
There's not a village green that hath not felt
The quick step of the dancers,—not a wife
That will not pour her wine and olive forth
As free as water,—not a loyal heart
That doth not at the Ave Mary bell
Give God and thy good sway the grace for these;—
And, therefore, we thy councillors are sad.

MARQUIS.

Sad at so goodly cheer, Sir Councillor!
I am no riddle-reader, make me know
What butt you bend at, aiming so awry.

PIETRO MALA.

We grieve because to-day is not to-morrow,
Nor now, eternity. Oh, my good lord!

Change only rules unchanged in this wide world.
The priestess that one morn decks us with flowers,
The morrow, slays us for the sacrifice.

ANTONIO.

Nay sooth! and men go to the knife like beasts
Fatted with fortune, dazzled with the gauds
That badge them for her shrine:—thence kneel we
thus.

MARQUIS.

Ah! friends, lend me your hearts, and not your knees;
True love stands straight, the false can bend, and lie:
Show me the chain whose subtle links can hold
This Proteus present to his proper form,
And heart and hand myself will rivet it
Past the undoing.

PIETRO MALA.

Let the promise, then,
Be warrant for the boldness of our love.

MARQUIS.

Speak it, and think it sealed.

PIETRO MALA.

My gracious prince,

The change we dread is not the change that comes

At seed-time, or at harvest, or at fall,—

A blight to rust the young grain in the blade,

Or suns to scorch the clusters from the vines,

Or murrain in the fair and speckled herds,

Or pestilence, doing the young to death ;

These might be borne or bettered ; but, alas!

If the fair fountain whence the river flows,

Whose gracious waters give the land its life,—

If this be dried, and die, what hope of help ?

We draw the breath on trust,—all—all, my lord,

Living the little minutes at the will

Of one grim creditor, whose sudden stroke

Signs the acquittance with the blood of life.

Oh ! if his shadow cross the palace-porch,

And turn thy banquet to a funeral,
Could we find remedy, or thy soul rest ?

MARQUIS.

Therefore——

PIETRO MALA.

Therefore, my liege, lest we be left
A prey to the best blade and longest lance,
We pray thee take thyself a crownèd wife ;
And when thy palace, like a tree in May,
Puts forth its promise of the after-fruit,
We shall learn early how to love our kings ;
And thou shalt leave thy crown and royalties
To foreheads broad enough to bear them well,—
Living another life in their young beauty,
Dying the father of a line of Lords.

MARQUIS.

What if I say, I will ?

PIETRO MALA.

Then, by your grace,
Such as are happy in your trust and love
Shall from the spacious garden of the court
Pluck out the newest and the queenliest flower
To lay it at your heart.

MARQUIS.

By Mary! no!
If for your sakes I bend me to this yoke,
I will be free to choose what yoke I will.

ANTONIO.

We ask no other law than that high will,
But like to like, my lord, is fairest match.

MARQUIS.

Say you so—know you so? I cannot tell;
The rose-stock, grafted with a stranger slip,
Puts out new blossoms, brighter than before.

Doth not the miner seek the diamond
Down in the rubbish of the under-world ?

ANTONIO.

But there 'tis dark and rough ; the workman's hand
Lends it the courtly splendour and the glint
That rank it with the trappings of a king.

MARQUIS.

What ! ratest thou the work beyond the gem ?
The world's astray, my lords, if kings must teach
Courtiers the lesson of humility ;
Yet to be courtly is not to be wise,
Nor just, nor generous, nor valiant ;
And many goods strong gold is weak to buy.
It were to be indeed a king, if kings
Had more of greatness than a meaner man.
But ah for us ! the world's nobility
Is not named noble for its nobleness.
Virtue is as the universal sky

That kisseth all alike the hills and dales ;
And ye shall meet her, oh ! as easily
In huts where Poverty and Sorrow wait
To bar her path, as in the halls of kings,
Where gilded doorways gape to take her in ;
Ever she makes her house in noble hearts,
Careless of clime or creed, like birds that build
Under mosque-roof or Christian basilic
Their nests for loves and lives. But birth and blood,
What are these to her, when, alas ! my lords,
Not the nice palate of the grave-yard worm
Knows the cast shell of vassal from a king's.
Ye smile, sirs,—sooth, for all your smiles and mine,
It may be, that in God's great book of life
The blood a peasant poureth for his lord,
Is writ more precious than the stream that warms
The heart he died to keep at even beating.

PIETRO MALA.

Our right is none to curb your royal will,

Our skill is small to guide you in the choosing ;
Only if you are purposed, we depart
Asking no other boon.

MARQUIS.

Thus far, be sure ;
Before another moon hath time to trim
Another silver lamp to guide the Night,
Myself will for myself fill up the throne
And take a wife. So ye shall promise me
This on your faith.

PIETRO MALA.

My liege, we wait to hear.

MARQUIS.

That be she come of peasant or of lord,
The lady whom my love shall dignify,—
Be she of matchless beauty, or of none,
Gentle or simple, eloquent or mute,

Wise or unwise, wealthy or dowerless,
She shall in all things hold your hearts and swords
Always her own ; and not a deed of yours,
A thought, a look, shall ever derogate
From your true service and her sovereignty :—
This shall ye swear on your cross-hilted blades.

OMNES.

Kneeling we swear.

MARQUIS.

Then wake the ghittern-strings !
Bid hearts be light, and happy eyes, like stars,
Shine to make brighter this our wedding-week.
Let seneschals make matters for a feast,
And cellarers ungaol the prisoned wine,
Till, like a rosy river, it o'erflow,
And drown care fathom-deep. Bring gold and pearls
From their dark houses in the earth and sea,
And make me wedding-robcs and coronals

Of bravest colours, and of richest stuff;
Till our gay gear shall make the rainbow dull.
Oh! we will bring her home—this queen of ours,
As if like angels we were leading up
A wandered planet to its place in heaven.
So speed you well.

OMNES.

Great thanks and humble, Lord.

[*Exeunt Omnes, but MARQUIS.*

MARQUIS (*solus*).

What! they would have me lose thee, my Griselda,—
My alder-liefest beauty, for some pair
Of soulless eyes, and some fair frozen lady,
Whose blood is all too courtly to run quick?
Methinks I have more skill at merchant-craft,
Than for gay goods of parcel-gilt to give
Mine own unpolished gold. Now am I not
A most bold bachelor to make the feast,—

The wedding-feast, and not to bid the bride?
Shall I not go before I buy my wares
And sight them closer? All that seems a prince
A trader's gown will hide. Aye! I will go,
And see my jewel glitter in the dusk,
Before its splendour flashes in the sun.

[*Exit* MARQUIS.]

SCENE II.

The Cottage of JANICOLA.

GRISELDA *spinning*, and LENETTE.

LENETTE.

Thou'lt not come?

GRISELDA.

I cannot, if I would,—

Indeed I cannot.

LENETTE.

Why, you turn your wheel as if it spun you music
and gold threads.

GRISELDA.

It spins all that is mine of either.

LENETTE.

If nothing else will make you idle, this must then.

GRISELDA.

What is it, thou silly one?

LENETTE.

Why, thy crown; and thou wilt wear it? Look,
now, here are the reddest rose-buds in the valley,
tied with grape-leaf and myrtle; and all, by
Baccho! plucked when the moon was up and the
dew down, to make thee queen of the feast. If

thou say'st another no, we 'll put rosemary in it, and the sad ancient rue, and thy subjects shall mock thee. Thou'lt come?

GRISELDA.

I may not say it, good Lenette! Take them my thanks. Say that I grieve to lose dances and flowers, for I specially love both; but, in sooth, they have many a girl fitter for the flower-crown.

LENETTE.

They'll not think so; if Griselda lead it not, who will say the feast was fine?

GRISELDA.

Nay! but I must not in truth dance and leave my father. It were better I tended his white hairs than crowned mine with roses. Thou art ever kind, Lenette; fill me this jar from the well: he

comes anon, and I must shred the herbs he loves,
and spread his seat.

LENETTE.

I'll have another answer then, thou stay-at-home!
Dost thou know the sound of a mandoline, or the
colour of the sky on a summer-night? Alas! no—
well, heaven send thee merrier mood.

GRISELDA.

And thee never a sad one. [Exit LENETTE.]

Now he will come weary, and sad, and worn,
And I must make him happy, gay, and glad;
It was a hard thing once, but that's all past.
I would his home were gayer, but, alas!
Wishing ne'er bettered want, what saith the song?

(*She sings.*)

“*On a mountain*

“*Rose a fountain,*

“*Sweet and quiet and crystal-clear to see;*

“Till it bubbled

“Sorely troubled,

“And a merry, roving streamlet longed to be.”

Ah, now I hear him; I am glad he comes
To make my labour double, but more dear.

Enter JANICOLA.

Thou'rt late, dear father.

JANICOLA.

Dost thou think I run
To such rare sights as an unfurnished board,
A hearth unlighted, and a house unroofed,
Where every idle wind comes whistling in
At his own will?

GRISELDA.

Nay, then, there's goodly store
Of herbs and fruits; and if the roof is thin,
The nights are clear; so we shall have the stars

To light us to our beds. Hast not thou seen
A thousand worse provided?

JANICOLA.

Aye! I have,
And counselled them to care no more for care,
And to give over the dull drudgery
That earns enough of life, only to feel
Life's wretchedness and curse. Thou!—why dost
thou
Keep thy white fingers working? Take thy rest!

GRISELDA.

Ah! now, if thinking on a thing to do
Were all one with the doing, we would sit
And see the hours wear themselves away,
As carelessly as though they measured sands,
And not sad lives.

JANICOLA.

Ho! dost thou think them sad?

GRISELDA.

Sorely for thee.

JANICOLA.

Good daughter ! bear with me.

Only for comfort of those patient eyes,
I have not left this buffeting for life,
Nor dropped my arms, nor sunk away, away,
Down in this salt life-sea.

GRISELDA.

Nor shalt thou yet ;

Why, father, is the happy talk all gone
Of yester-night ? Didst thou not say a star
Was named in heaven the night that I was born,
And nurses talked of——

JANICOLA.

Talked of gold—Aye ! aye !

And said there was a line along the brow
That meant a crown ; and that the little hands

Would come to touch velvets and silvered silks,
 And think them common stuff.—I mind it well ;
 Oh, I'll be merry as a mocking-bird,
 So thou wilt kiss me.

GRISELDA.

Nay ! I'll not do that
 Till thou hast laughed a quarter by the glass ;
 Now to thy supper. When I am a queen
 Thou shalt eat out o' gold. [*Some one knocks.*

Ah ! 'tis Lenette,
 The kind wild girl—how quickly she is come !

[*She opens.*

Enter MARQUIS OF SALUZZO *disguised as a trader.*

What is your will ?

MARQUIS.

I pray you pardon me :
 I fear I break the quiet of your home
 With an unwelcome footstep.

GRISELDA.

Oh, sir, no !

How may we stead you ?

MARQUIS.

I have goods of store,
Somewhat too loosely guarded from the storm,
Crimson brocades, and stuffs of Genoa,
With silver-work of Florence rarely wrought ;
And for I fear a cloud is sweeping up,
I would be bold to borrow for a space
The shadow of your homestead.

GRISELDA.

Enter, sir ;

My father then shall bid you better welcome
Than I have skill to make you.

JANICOLA.

Signor, sit !

I am well pleased to serve you, pray you sit ;

Little but welcome, and a right good will
We have to greet you with ; but these are yours,
As free as words can make 'em.

MARQUIS.

Reverend sir,
Small service is true service when the will,
And not the work, is rated. I had rather
A cup of water from a willing hand,
Than a great bowl of purple Cyprus wine
Meted me drop by drop.

JANICOLA.

Thou sayest well ;
So our poor hut is thine.

MARQUIS.

But you are rich,
If this fair, gentle maiden be your daughter,
As I must think she is.

JANICOLA.

Aye! upon that,
I'll string as many stories of her love
As ever thou didst pearls.

GRISELDA.

Alas! I fear
They are not fine enough to set in words;
Therefore, dear father, leave them. Didst thou come
By Saluzzo, Sir Trader?

MARQUIS.

Even thence;
There was a talk at court of wedding-feasts
That would be soon, and that the Prince would take
A sharer of his crown.

GRISELDA.

It is the tale.

MARQUIS.

I trust my wares will find a market then.

What of this Prince? Hath he the general love?

JANICOLA.

Not to be slandered is a step to praise,

And thus much praise he hath. 'Tis a brave Prince :

But men do say that he can change and change ;

They say he hath two faces, and two favours—

One for his fasting-days, and one for feasts,

Bitter and sweet.

MARQUIS.

Why, that, methinks, were well ;

A great king standing lone 'mid friends and foes,

Should look o' both sides. Mark yon mighty Alps,

They front the Switzer woods with frowning crags

Where storms are stored, but smile on Italy

With summer softness and eternal green.

(*To GRISELDA.*) Hast thou beheld this Janus?

GRISELDA.

I!—I saw

A gallant, goodly gentleman ride by

One morning at the hawking, and they said

It was the Prince.

MARQUIS.

Saw you him not again?

GRISELDA.

Twice by our village-well,—yes! it was twice;

For the last time he seemed to gaze on me

Something too earnestly.

MARQUIS.

I wonder not

But rather how his eyes could leave the look-
ing.

Hath he not yellow hair?

GRISELDA.

Nay, liker yours,
Black and close-curved.

MARQUIS.

His port, I think, was meek,
With nothing of a kingly bearing in 't.

GRISELDA.

Oh! it was full of knightly majesty,
He sate his steed as 't were a canopied throne,
Chafing its proud heart into mutiny
Only for the dear joy of taming it
With curb and rowel. Sooth! I think again,
His inches were most nearly thine, Sir Trader.

MARQUIS.

'Tis very like. Now if I were to choose
A wife for him, I would not seek her far.

GRISELDA.

How, Sir?

MARQUIS.

I pray thee let me see thy hand ;
I have some skill at palmistry.

GRISELDA.

'Tis there.

Not fair, but very frank : what canst thou read ?

MARQUIS.

A world of meanings in its tender white ;
And goodness, gentleness, and maidenhood,
In its blue-veined beauty. It reminds me
Of a dear lady who will be my wife.
I pray thee, let the memory pardon me

If mine unworthy lips shall touch it thus,
Thinking it hers.

GRISELDA.

Is this thy palmistry?
Betake thee to thy craft.

MARQUIS.

Canst bear to hear
All I can tell? Look! a broad line of life,
Crossed once and once again. Aye, thou wilt be
All that thou wouldst, and more. There's a fair table,
Promising pretty children, and a crown,
Palaces, wealth beyond the counting, gems;
With all the ornaments that ladies love,
To deck these dainty fingers, that unfold
Their destiny so fairly. Wilt have more?

GRISELDA.

Aye! when the half of what you tell is true,—
Till then I am contented.

JANICOLA.

Gentle Sir,

Keep your fine words—they'll be fair ware at Court:
We be plain folk, whose candle is the sun,
And he, thou seest, burns down ; if thou'lt rest here
We'll give thee willing lodgment.

MARQUIS.

Oh ! your bounty

Beggars my thanks. The night is clear again,
And tempts me to my road. To-morrow, Sir,
By your good leave, I will repay you better.

JANICOLA.

Nay, Sir, God give you speed !

MARQUIS.

And you ! (*Aside.*) To-morrow,—
Not later, lest I die before I fetch
This white vale-lily from its hidden home
And set it first o' the garland. [*Exit.*

ACT II.

SCENE I.

—

The Village-well.—GRISELDA and LENETTE *filling their pitchers with the well-water.*

LENETTE.

And so this solemn keeping of the face,—
The seldom-smiling lip, and smooth staid cheek,
Where never deeper blush did dare to show
Than just enough to say it was not stone,—
The even beating of an idle heart,—
The lip that had no leisure for love-talk ;—
Ah ! must it end—all, all, thou stricken one,
With sighs and an alas ?

GRISELDA.

I said not so !

Only I said, if it were well to love,
And if to love were to be loved again ;
And if it were not matter for a blush
To say so much ; his was a noble face,
With such sweet meanings written duskly in't,
That it were no life lost to spell them out
All a life long.

LENETTE.

Ah ! the keen Stranger-Trader,
That bought a heart for nothing.

GRISELDA.

Thou dost wrong me,
Naming our names together.

LENETTE.

Wherefore, sweet ?

GRISELDA.

They make no music ; small thanks he would give
For the undowered lip and empty hand
Thou idly makest his. Yet he was fair.

LENETTE.

Oh ! very fair,— nay, almost fair enough
To love, if only it were well to love ;
And if to love were to be loved again,
And if, and if, and if——

GRISELDA.

Thou false, false friend !
How like a cruel justicer thou turn'st
My own allowings to my own undoing !
I tell thee I am scatheless : how should I
Have time or turn for loving ?

LENETTE.

I believe it,
Specially as thou seal'st thy protest too,

With a large sigh that saith, "I love him so!"
Nay, answer not! I'll not believe thy no
Fifty times spoken; and take comfort, sweet,
Thou'rt in the fashion,—the Court's wiving too,
They go a-hunting for a Queen to-day;
Come, now, and see them pass.

GRISELDA.

I'll go with thee,
That thou mayest have a thing to jest upon;
But help me first to call the cattle home. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II.

A Cattle-stall outside the Cottage of GRISELDA.

Enter MARQUIS, Courtiers, Knights, and Ladies.

MARQUIS.

Farther than this we will not wend to-day.

PIETRO MALA.

My liege! this is the poorest hut of all,

Dwelt in by one who never in his days
Had for to-morrow. He's at war with death ;
And each day that he lives is a hard battle—
Won with a broken sword.

MARQUIS.

Why, then, 't were well
We looked upon so brave a soldier !
Hath not the man a daughter ?

PIETRO MALA.

They do say so.

MARQUIS.

Griselda ?

PIETRO MALA.

Even so.

MARQUIS.

And very fair ?

PIETRO MALA.

They that have seen her say as fair as may be.

MARQUIS.

Fair as may be, for fairer may not be ;
I rede you, learn betimes, to do her honour ;
'Twill be the task and lesson of your life.
Look where she comes ! Dio ! how beautiful !
Griselda !

Enter GRISELDA *and* LENETTE.

GRISELDA (*aside*).

Lenette ! Lenette ! the Trader is the Prince.
Ah ! me.

MARQUIS.

Griselda, set thy pitcher down.
Come to me here ! Nay, not upon thy knee !
Where is thy father ?

GRISELDA.

Lord ! he is alone

Within the house.

MARQUIS.

I pray you fetch him forth.

[*Exit* GRISELDA.]

Stand by me in your order, gentles all,
And doff the jewelled bonnets from your brows,—
Ye have beheld your Queen.

Enter GRISELDA and JANICOLA.

GRISELDA to JANICOLA.

Said I not well ?

See what an angry cloud sits on his brow ;
Let's kneel and pray it pass us.

JANICOLA.

Wherefore, child ?

We owe him nothing but the air we breathe ;

If he hath come to take the price of it,
Let him say on.

GRISELDA.

Dost thou not know the face,—
The trader's cap changed to a princely crown?
Kneel, father! 'tis thy guest of yester-eve
Come back a King!

JANICOLA.

Alas! I knew him not.
(*To the MARQUIS.*) Oh my Lord Marquis, I was
over-bold
The yesternight when thou wert masking it.

MARQUIS.

Nay! I can bear to hear the truth of me,
And thank a true man for it; and to-day
I came to try thy love and not to chide it.
Give me thine ear.

[*They walk aside.*]

I think thou lovest me,
As honest liegeman loveth rightful lord,
And therefore am I bold to ask a boon.

JANICOLA.

What boon is mine to give or not to give?
My liege! I am a very poor old man,
Whose loyalty and service, if its worth
Be rated by its givings, beggars me
As much in service as in worldly store.

MARQUIS.

Nay! but thou hast a thing dearer to me
Than all the pearls and rubies of the earth;
Which, an thou givest me, I would honour less
The monarch who should load an argosy
With ingots of red gold, and call them mine,
Than thou whose loyalty from nothingness
Gavest me more than all.

JANICOLA.

Thou knowest, lord,
That I have nothing ; therefore, gracious lord,
If thou wilt take from nothing, wherefore ask
A beggar's leave to take it ?

MARQUIS.

Wilt thou know
Why thy ungracious answer cannot move
My patience to a frown ?—I love thy daughter,—
So well that I must have her for my wife !
What wilt thou say ?

JANICOLA.

Alas ! alas ! my lord,
I did deserve correction, but not mocking.
This is no prince's palace !—you are strayed
Out of the way. Those gaudy gentlemen
Will tell you I am old Janicola
That eat o' the roots, with his white daughter there.

MARQUIS.

How wilt thou credit me?—Give me an oath.

JANICOLA.

Thou saidst, I love her.

MARQUIS.

Aye! with heart and soul.

JANICOLA.

Thou sayest, She must be my wife and lady.

MARQUIS.

I did.

JANICOLA.

Griselda?

MARQUIS.

Even she.

JANICOLA.

My daughter ?

MARQUIS.

Yea ! and my soul's sworn love.

JANICOLA.

Indeed, I think

That thou art sad in this, but yet 'tis strange !

Oh ! give me grace, my lord, these hairs are grey,

She's the last thing I have. Dost thou so love her ?

MARQUIS.

Yea ! by mine honour and my hope of ruth.

JANICOLA.

'Tis over strange; yet I will credit thee.

Speak to her, good my lord ; let the surprise

Paint her cheek red and white ; and what she says

I'll say it too.

MARQUIS.

Why, then, give me thy hand ;
And I will ask her if her will doth serve.
Look you how pale she is ! Now I shall bring
The blood into her cheek again ;—Griselda !
Leave trembling, maiden, and come here to us.

[GRISELDA *approaches and kneels.*

Nay ! thou must never kneel. Come near to me,
Lay thy true hand in this true hand of mine,
And take good heart and listen earnestly.
I have thy father's warrant for my words,
Who heareth what I swear. Before the God
Who made us both, Griselda, of one clay,
And knoweth what he made, and readeth hearts ;
I love thee truly, royally, and well :
If thou wilt love me loyally and truly,
Never to change, and never to repent,
Whatever chance or change in life betide,
Half of my throne, and all my love, is thine.

GRISELDA.

My lord !

MARQUIS.

I pray thee, be not so dismayed ;
The cold marsh-ague could not shake thee so
As these my words. Look up again, dear heart !
I'll say the oath a thousand several times,
So thou'lt believe it better.

GRISELDA.

My good lord !

MARQUIS.

Nay ! do not weep ; I bade thee lift thine eyes,
And thou hast dimmed them with so big a tear
I cannot see their meaning. Dear Griselda,
Is it so hard a thing to love a prince ?

GRISELDA.

I'll not think that you jest thus ; 'twere too base
And too unprincely. No ! you could not do it.
I pray you hold me not unmaidenly,
If I shall look fixedly on your face,
And I will answer as a subject should,
And as a maiden may.

MARQUIS.

Why, gaze thy fill !
Canst thou see aught writ on this brow of mine,
Or in these eyes, whose meaning thou dost read
Book-like, but love,—true love, sweet wonderer,
And knightly faith and honour.

GRISELDA.

Dear my lord !
I do believe you from my very soul ;
And for your kind love I return you here,

For ever and for ever while I live,
The little all I have,—a maiden heart,
A most unchanging loyalty and love,
Obedience that shall never faint or fail,
And thankful service that shall task itself
To serve yet better, and to love still more.
And the dear God, who knoweth I say true,
Be witness for me !

MARQUIS.

And for me, who seal
The oath of two lips with one loving kiss.
Kiss me back boldly, lovingly, Griselda ;
And our sweet match is made. So! that is well!—
I will be merchant, sweetheart, once again,
To make exchanges at so fair a mart.

(Kisses her again.)

GRISELDA.

Alas ! my lord, thy trade will beggar thee,
I pay thee nothing, and thou givest me all.

MARQUIS.

Thou wrong'st thyself, thyself not valuing ;
Thou dost give love, and takest sovereignty,
So we are honest traders. Nay ! they say
That loving arms cling closer than the purple,
And to be master of a faithful heart
Is more than ruling kingdoms ; thus is love
Greater than sovereignty, and thou art wronged.

GRISELDA.

Then is the wrong so sweet a wrong, my lord,
That thanks for ever leave the wrong unthanked.
I would my lip could take from that of thine
The trick of queening it, as thine hath taken
From this of mine its love.

MARQUIS.

Thou shalt make trial
Presently with thy liegemen. Nobles all,
Your lady waits your leal welcoming,

PIETRO MALA.

I will be tongue and lip to their dumb welcome,
And make it loyally. Most noble lady,
Whose worthy beauty wins to-day a throne,
We hail thee for the Queen of us and ours,
And tender true allegiance. These our swords
Are thine to sheathe and draw. If we could bare
Our hearts, as we can bare our honest blades,
We'd show thee, written in the cores of them,
The record of our love. We greet you well.

GRISELDA.

I thank you,—and I thank you humbly, lords,
Mindful of what I was, and not forgetting
All that I am and shall be; for your love,
In that I was not better than the worst,
I thank you humbly, and will task myself
Still to deserve it;—for your fealty,
Ye pay it to your lady, and as she,
I take mine own with thanks.

MARQUIS.

Why! bravely spoken.

Take here thine own! (*Crowning her*) Do you, fair
ladies, fetch

The miniver, the ermines, and the zone,

And robe your mistress as a queen doth robe.

We will await you here. [Exeunt.

Let music sound,

And play a strain that hath no sorrow in't.

Sorrow is out of tune.

[*Music plays, presently enter GRISELDA attired
regally with gems, &c.*

MARQUIS.

Indeed, I did not know thou wert so fair.

Speak, speak, my queen, and make the music dull.

GRISELDA.

Shall not my father go along with us,

And this my friend too?

JANICOLA.

Ask him, good my daughter!

For leave to live unstirred. I love not courts,
Though thou be lady there.

MARQUIS.

I would thy boon
Were something worthier; thou shouldst be, good
sir,

In yonder palace, even with the best;
Yet have thy will. Thou that hast lost thy mate
Shall find her yet, and love her as thy lady,
Doing all nearest service. Nay! your thanks
Must be to her; lead out my horse again,
And bring the palfrey with the cloth of gold.
Our road lies to the Palace. Sweetheart! come!

[*Exeunt Omnes.*

PIETRO MALA to JANICOLA.

This is rare to you, sir!

JANICOLA.

Nay, nay! I have seen a company of daws ere
now about a dove. Will you not follow your feather,
Signors? [*Exit* JANICOLA.

PIETRO MALA.

He hath a strange manner.

ANTONIO.

Aye, and matter, for that.—If thou wilt, let us
discourse on this to-morrow in the gardens of the
house.

PIETRO MALA.

We will, and now to follow them. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE III.

The Gardens of the Palace.

Enter PIETRO MALA and ANTONIO.

PIETRO MALA.

Where is the King Cophetua?

ANTONIO.

He's within,

Playing at loving with the beggar-lady.

PIETRO MALA.

What doth the passion hold?

ANTONIO.

Most constantly;

He hath forsworn the sceptre and the crown,

And will not look on dry decrees of state.

He traceth veins along his lady's hands,

And binds his bravest jewels in her braids,

Nor thinks them half so gleaming ; he would say so,
But that from dawn to dusk the royal lips
Are over-close for talking.

PIETRO MALA.

Will it last ?

ANTONIO.

Yes ! while she wears the crown as if the crown
Were what it is for being on her brow.
She meets him still in each particular,
And shows as royal to his royalty,
As loving to his love.

PIETRO MALA.

Hath she a charm
To witch all hearts to her ? There's not a tongue
That hath not learned to laud her.

ANTONIO.

Aye ! and none

That laudeth worthily. She doth not keep
One memory of her simple peasant state,
Save to be simple-hearted. Thou didst see
The tournament, and how she queened it there ?

PIETRO MALA.

Not I, by this good light.

ANTONIO.

It was thy loss ;
She gave away the prizes of the ring,
Coupling the gifts with such rare courtesy
And regal speech, that every bleeding knight
Forgot his wounds, and would have braced again
His broken vaunt-brace ; aye ! and drained his heart
For such another guerdon.

PIETRO MALA.

Sups she not
Under these trees at vespers with the prince ?

ANTONIO.

The feast is spread, thou seest, in the garden ;
If thou wilt stay, we'll taste their cheer, and see
How the play prospers.

PIETRO MALA.

Let us stay — they come.

Enter MARQUIS, with train of Attendants, &c.

[*They take their places, and the
banquet begins.*]

MARQUIS.

Fill up the cups ! The reveller whose lip
Shall let the bubbles burst before he drinks,
Doth us high treason. Thou, Pietro Mala,
Melt thy sage wrinkles into smiles to-night
With the rare Cypriot.

PIETRO MALA.

Oh ! our joy is young,

It shall be ripe and lusty, my good lord,
When our dear lady's smile shines on the feast.

MARQUIS.

Nay, then, 'tis grown already,—for she comes.
Queen of my land and love, the banquet lacked
Thee only, but in thee lacked all its best!

GRISELDA.

My light is thine,—shine still on me, dear sun;
And to thy golden and most gracious rays,
I, like the moon,—the patient, watchful
moon,—
Will send back silver shining, borrowed beams.

MARQUIS.

Wilt thou be as the moon to change and change?

GRISELDA.

My sun sets not, as hers. I need not change.

MARQUIS.

Nay, but it may !

GRISELDA.

Then I'll not be the moon,
But a poor star, which, when its light is gone,
Keeps to its path and post.

MARQUIS.

Sweet ! throne thee here ;
Wilt thou command the revels ? Shall they trip
A courtly measure for thy pleasuring,
Or wilt have music ?

BERTOLO.

There is come, Madonna,
To Saluzzo, a troubadour of note ;
He waits your bidding.

GRISELDA.

Oh, we bid him straight :
Whence cometh he ?

BERTOLO.

Last from Lauretta's court,—

The Countess of Bologna.

GRISELDA.

He doth name

Thy sister, Walter.

MARQUIS.

Even so, my heart !

Doubtless she sends a message sisterly

Of praise and promise hither. Look, he comes

Enter BERTRAM.

Thy name ?

BERTRAM.

Bertram di Bocca d'Oro, Prince.

MARQUIS.

Right fit for roundelays ; if thou bring'st speech

More sober than thy rebeck's to Saluzzo,
Tell it out first.

BERTRAM.

Thy sister bade me lay
Before thy beauteous lady's gentle feet
Her love and commendation ; being thine,
Her weal is hers. This scroll, and what it saith,
Ends my commission.

MARQUIS.

Let this jewel pay
Its fair fulfilment. Hast thou taught thy strings
A feast-song for us ?

GRISELDA.

Sing, Sir Troubadour,
We love the music well.

BERTRAM.

Alas ! my strings

Sound well to common ears at village-wakes,
But this is a brave festival, and I—
I have no skill save for a simple song.

GRISELDA.

Oh, sing a simple song, for I have thought,
Listening to many a modern line and lay
Of minstrelsy excelling, that their strings
Strove for too great an utterance, and so missed
The ready road that quiet music finds
Right to the heart; like as an o'erstrained bow
Shoots past the butt. Dame Nature doth not thus
And minstrels are her children, and should stand
Close at their mother's knee to learn of her.
Look! when she will be beautiful or great,
She strains not for her rainbows or her stars,
But with deft finger works her wonders in
With an unruffled quiet, a soul-felt
And unregardful strength,—so that her storms,
Her calms, night, day, moon-risings and sunsets,

Wood-songs and river-songs, and waves and winds,
Come without noise of coming. Ah! I love,
When 'tis voiced tenderly—a simple song,—
A song whereto the caught ear listens close,
To hear a heart, and not a chord speak out
Musical truthfulness.

BERTRAM.

Most wise Madonna,
Small skill is mine of this. If you will hear 'em,
I have a few rhymes to my lady's eyes,
And one or two poor stories of old wars,
Such as the gossips sing; with, it may be,
A tale of derring-do, and light-o'-love;
Farther than these I know not.

GRISELDA.

Oh, sir, yes!
You wrong your fame, speaking so lightly of it;
I pray you to your craft.

BERTRAM.

Now, by my Lady,
Thy silver asking makes the music harsh,
Yet what my rebeck skills to rival it,
I will be lavish in. Will't please you hear
A song of love ?

MARQUIS.

Aye, sing it, courtly sir !

BERTRAM *sings.*

Dial-shadows mark the hours

When the sky is blue and bright ;

Virelays and violet-flowers

Gladden hearts, when hearts are light :

Better live and love and rue it,

Than not live and love.

While storms come of sunny weather,

While the sunshine makes the shade,

*While hearts will not beat together,
Love will still be love betrayed:
Better yet to love and rue it,
Than to never love.*

MARQUIS.

Doth he say sooth, Griselda ?

GRISELDA.

It were hard
For him, and us, and all, if such were sooth :
Look you, it is the fashion of the time
To rhyme sweet rhymes and sing them daintily,
Touching this woman-fault. Our praise is said
Roughly in wrack and pain, our blame they make
Matter for mandolines ;—nay, but I err,—
Doubtless the measure mends.

BERTRAM.

Madonna ! no.

For the sad lack of constancy, it praises

The love that sweetly overlives a kiss,
Yet there comes wisdom at the end.

MARQUIS.

Nay, then,
For wisdom's sake sing on !

BERTRAM *sings.*

*When ye press your ladies nearest,
List not if their hearts beat love ;
When their eyes are beaming fairest,
Look not if their glances rove :
Better far to love and rue it
Than to never love.*

*Kiss your leman when she smileth,
Though your love be her annoy,
While her ripe red lip beguileth,
Is its light touch less a joy ?
Better, ah ! to love and rue it
Than to never love.*

*All the woes the morrows make us
Never spoiled a present bliss;
Feres that take us may forsake us,
Dio!—dearer is the kiss;
Better then to love and rue it
Than to never love.*

MARQUIS.

St. Paul! I think not so.

BERTRAM.

Lord, by your leave,
The wise man speaketh now.

MARQUIS.

'T is over time!

BERTRAM *sings.*

*Love, sweet love, is minstrel learning,
All but sages so are ruled;
Sages, our sweet follies spurning,*

*Bid ye be not over-fooled:
Better not to love and rue it
Than to ever love.*

MARQUIS to GRISELDA.

What think'st thou?

GRISELDA.

Higher of his measure far
Than of his matter; 't is too fine a strain
To slander true love in.

MARQUIS.

Art thou not charmed
Almost into a disbelief of love,
When Love's own almoner and subject sings
Disloyalty so well?

GRISELDA.

Not with a song.
My heart remembers, and remembering loves

Once and for ever. Give me leave, fair sirs,
And take my thanks. For thee, Sir Troubadour,
We shall think lightly of the Southern dames
Until thy penitence be sung as sweet
As this thy heresy.

[*Exeunt* GRISELDA, *Ladies, and Courtiers.*

MARQUIS (*alone with* BERTRAM).

What song is that?

BERTRAM.

A lay of mine thy noble sister lov'
She bade me sing it here.

MARQUIS.

Know'st thou the sense
Her letter bears?

BERTRAM.

My noble lord, not I.

MARQUIS.

'Tis well. I shall have need of thee ; meanwhile
Make here my havings thine.

BERTRAM.

I humbly thank you.

[*Exit* BERTRAM.]

MARQUIS (*alone*).

My love is like a river grown too large

For little lets to stay, yet I do fret,

Wondrously at her scripture : thus she saith,—

“Thy village spousal is Italy’s gossip ; take
heed it be not its scorn. Thou art the most
fortunate or the most witless of men ; yet must
thou mar thy fortune to prove thy wit. If thou
wilt wear thy jewel bravely, try it boldly ;
if not, its lustre must be still suspect. Thus
much the opinion of thy dignity asketh of the
blindness of thy love.”

Is my love blind? good sister,—no! or blind,
With gazing ever on a steadfast star
Of sweet perfections; so my darkness is
Gender'd of heavenly light. Yet I do fear;
Not for my name,—albeit a noble name
Must not be lightly lost,—not for the note
My wisdom had, good sister;—wisdom's self
Might stoop to folly for a love like mine.
Yet thou sayest well,—this jewel must be tried,—
Tried like the gold, with fire of fancied wrath,—
Tried like the adamant, with stroke of scorn,—
Tried to the pitch of sufferance. If she fail,
Like a most desperate alchemist, I lose
All at a loss;—if she come clear of that,
Detraction's breath can never taint her more.
I that I chose her,—she that she kept oath,
Shall be the country's love and wonderment;
And naming perfect wifehood, they shall name
The wife Lord Walter married from the stall.

ACT III.

SCENE I.

—

An Apartment in the Palace.

LENETTE enters, meeting BERTOLO.

LENETTE.

What, Bertolo, art thou back?

BERTOLO.

But newly come, freighted with gifts and good wishes from Genoa's Duke.

LENETTE.

Good wishes burdened thee little; what were the gifts?

BERTOLO.

I have a cast of hawks for my lord, featl
and flecked with silver, fairer than the daint
wrist they ever sat on. For my lady, a fanc
work of jewels, but the birds are rare.

LENETTE.

Thou shouldst be hooded like them, to say
so. But what of the fancy-work,—is it pearls?
—pearls become my lady rarely.

BERTOLO.

I know not. How fareth she?

LENETTE.

Hast not heard? then have I a woman's joy
news to tell!

BERTOLO.

And a woman's tongue to tell them, Lenette.

LENETTE.

Maybe; but my lady Griselda is in thy absence lighter by the sweetest boy and girl th' ever mother welcomed.

BERTOLO.

Say'st thou? the bells have told it then?

LENETTE.

Aye, and the wine-skins bled for it: they have mortally wounded forty this past month.

BERTOLO.

I would I had been at their shriving! but, in truth, this is good hearing for Lord Walter and the Court.

LENETTE.

Nay, he hath been altered of late, and shows his joy strangely. To-day he is exceeding wroth, and the first of it is for Frederigo.

BERTOLO.

Why? what hath he done?

LENETTE.

Slandered my lady vilely. Thou dost remember how her father Janicola would not follow her fortunes hither, and so comes never nigh the palace. I dare tell thee, being discreet, that the lady Griselda hath ofttimes taken gifts and her love a-foot to him, and this with the praise and knowledge of Lord Walter. All which hidden goodness this fellow knew, and said ill things of her daughterly visits. But here comes my lord; thou wilt do well to say over thy sweeter phrases, for I know that he chafes horribly.

Enter MARQUIS, Nobles, &c.

MARQUIS.

Antonio! look these letters be obeyed.

The slanderous mouth, that good deeds cannot clo-

Shall taint no air of ours.—Ah! Bertolo,
Whence comest thou?

BERTOLO.

My lord, from Genoa.

MARQUIS.

We'll hear thy news anon. [*Exit* BERTOLO.

Pietro, tell me,

Thou knowest the people:—Is it common with them
To say such slander as this villain said
Of ladies spotless as this lady is?

PIETRO MALA.

I thought no tongue could speak but it would praise

her:

I think none other would. Greatness is sin
To envious low ones ever; but her crown
Hath better glory than its gems and gold,
And as much love as honour.

MARQUIS.

'T is no less
Than she may claim. Go seek out Bertolo,
And take his tidings for me. Leave me, lords.
Lenette ! bid here thy lady.

(*Solus*) They shall have
Stronger confirmment of her worthiness.
They joyed to see her smile,—she shall weep yet,
And own no higher title than her tears,
To make them sad with her. I will begin
Now while my purpose holds,—another day
Will kiss the purpose from me. Ah ! she comes.
Sweet love, be strong for thy sake and for mine.

Enter GRISELDA.

GRISELDA.

How fares my lord ?

MARQUIS.

Well pleased to see thee well.
Hadst thou my message ?

GRISELDA.

Nay! I heard but now
That thou wert angered with yon slanderer.
I pray thee let not such a fellow dwell
In my lord's thought—the more so that his sin
Toucheth not thee but me.

MARQUIS.

He is away
To mourn it at his leisure. By St. Paul!
Is not thine honour mine? I am right sad
He 'scaped so lightly.

GRISELDA.

I—I pity him.
Forget his folly, Walter, as I do;
'T is slight as was the slanderer. Come and see
Our little ones asleep.

MARQUIS.

Is my boy well?

GRISELDA.

Ask that of both, love, and I'll answer thee ;
They are so like they never should be named
But in a breath. The leaves of one red rose
Wear not so near a colour as their cheeks ;
And river-ripples are not more the same
Than her light smile and his. Come and look on
them !

MARQUIS.

I think more of thy little maid, my wife,
Than my words show.

GRISELDA.

Oh then ! do I not know it ?
Thou couldst not look upon her, and not love her,
Loving me so, and she so like to me :
Give me thy hand and come.

MARQUIS.

Nay, give me thine !

I meant another thing. That day, Griselda,
When from thy low estate I lifted thee
To high nobility,—hast 'thou forgot it?

GRISELDA.

Ah, no! Before I sleep I think on it,
That all my dreams may be a dream of that;
It comes first to my heart when daylight comes
First to mine eyes; and all day long it makes
Thy love a miracle.

MARQUIS.

Well,—very well!
Thou wottest then how that thou camest here
With no more queenship than a single hour
Had made thee mistress of.

GRISELDA.

I think it o'er,
The circumstance of thine exceeding love,
A thousand times a-day.

MARQUIS.

'Tis well! and when
The fine, fair ladies of the court had decked thee
And robed in gold, upon a steed of snow,
Past thy self-knowledge beautiful and bright,
Thou rodest to my house, what oath was it
Thy lips had spoken?

GRISELDA.

To be leal and true
For that thy love,—to be submiss and gentle
Unto thy love,—to recompense thy love
With the return of an unchanging faith
And loyalty and service.

MARQUIS.

Aye! it ran so,
And if that love changed——

GRISELDA.

So should never mine,

But wear a steadfast face and even look
Whatever chance or change in life betided :—
Thus did I swear.

MARQUIS.

And wilt thou keep the oath ?

GRISELDA.

I do, and will until I die.—Alas !
Dost thou not love me then ?

MARQUIS.

I said not that.

Look not so deadly pale ; but listen now :
This matter of the malcontents goes farther
Than the poor lie of one. They love thee not,
They hold it shame to be o'erruled of thine,
And ask, what doth thy daughter in the court ?
The boy will have a hand to guard his head ;

But for his peace and mine the girl must go,
And that, too, presently. Wilt thou take well
What it is well to do?

GRISELDA.

Lord, as thou wilt.

My child and I, in all humility,
Are all—all thine, and thou mayest save or spill
What is thine own: needs must it please me well
If it please thee; for so God's Mother keep me,
I ask for nothing,—nothing dread to lose,
Save only thee; and this is in my heart
Ever and ever, nor shall time or trial
Change my firm courage to another place.

MARQUIS.

Aye! keep thee to that mind, and go thy ways.
I'll send anon to thee.

[*Exit* GRISELDA.]

Oh, my brave wife !

I do my love more wrong than I do thine.

Be still as true, and I'll be still as cruel,

And when the end comes thou'lt have sweet revenge.

SCENE II.

GRISELDA'S *Apartment.* LENETTE *watching
the young children.*

Enter GRISELDA.

GRISELDA.

Sleep they, Lenette ?

LENETTE.

Since thou went hence, Madonna,

They have not stirred.

GRISELDA.

My little noble girl,

Doth she rest well?

LENETTE.

The shadow of her brother,

She sleeps and wakes with him; they'd live to die

If they should live to sever.

GRISELDA.

Sayest thou so?

God keep her as He may, if that be true.

LENETTE.

Madonna, why?

GRISELDA.

All things may chance to all,

And this to her.

LENETTE.

Nay, never!

GRISELDA.

But it may,—

Alas ! indeed, it may.

LENETTE.

Ah ! surely no.

Look at them sleeping, when they smile asleep
Good angels show them what their lives will be,
And the sight makes them glad. I've heard it told
By ancient nurses.

GRISELDA.

Let me see them smile.—

Dear loves ! fit company for heavenly ones,
I could believe that silver pennons paused
Above them, and that angels' eyes looked down,
Love-wrapt, as I do now — so pure they seem,
So beautiful, so tender, and so new
From walking in the paths of Paradise :—

Ah! my sweet girl, she smiles! Would God, Lenette,
I could believe thy tale!

LENETTE.

Thou mayest believe it.
What jewels will my noble lady wear
Upon St. Michael's feast?

GRISELDA.

Jewels, Lenette!

LENETTE.

If it shall please you. Thou didst warmly praise
My lord's last gift,— the zone of amethyst,—
The silver one: 'twill clasp right worthily
Thy crimson robes.

GRISELDA.

Aye, robes! Thou dost remind me.
Bring me the gown and kirtle that I wore

When my lord rode to fetch me from the field ;—
I had well-nigh forgotten that these two
May soon be one ; and if it come to that,
There is much need to learn the lesson well,
And they shall be my book. (*LENETTE brings them.*)

Thanks, good Lenette !

These maiden-weeds, all lowly as they be,
Teach patience wondrous well. (*Knocking.*)

Who's at the door ? (*LENETTE opens.*)

LENETTE.

A message from my lord.

GRISELDA.

Who beareth it ?

Enter MARTINO.

MARTINO.

I, lady.

GRISELDA.

Who art thou ?

MARTINO.

Martino Scalza,

The sergeant of the guard.

GRISELDA.

I know thee not.

MARTINO.

'Tis very like thou wilt not hold me hence
In fair remembrance.

GRISELDA.

Why, what bringest thou?

MARTINO.

That which I mean to speak. Great ones, good
madam,

Do as they list; and they who suffer of them

Must bear it and bewail. I am not one

To stand against the storm; and, sooth to say,

Madam, I will not.

GRISELDA.

Say what wrings you, sir ?

MARTINO.

Thy lord—my master, bids me bear thee what
Thou must take of me.

GRISELDA.

If it come from him,
Speak welcomely ; I'll hear it willingly !

MARTINO.

Thus then, I am intrusted to deliver :—
My lord commends me to your patient grace,
And prays you, of your courtesy, to give
Unto me here, without or let or stop,
The little maid your child.

GRISELDA.

So soon ?

MARTINO.

Aye! now.

GRISELDA.

What is your warrant, sir?

MARTINO.

His signet-ring,

Behold it here!

GRISELDA.

It never yet set seal

To aught unworthy of his nobleness:

I will obey it.

MARTINO.

Madam, you were best.

GRISELDA.

Yes! but this cometh somewhat suddenly;

Yet I'll obey it. Give me pardon, sir ;
Art thou to have my girl ?

MARTINO.

Madam; I am.

My lord's behest is that you render it,
Sleeping or waking, here into my hands,
Thereafter——

GRISELDA.

Oh! say on!

MARTINO.

I say too much,
More is not in my message ; by your leave
I'll find it here, and quit you. (*Goes to the bed*)

GRISELDA.

No! oh, no!
Thou art not gentle, thou wilt wake my babe.

MARTINO.

She'll sleep enough anon.

GRISELDA.

I fear I read

A bitter meaning in your broken speech :
But I'll not think so,—you are not to take her ;
Your hands are hard with arquebuss and sword,
Used to the clench of iron. You are fierce,
And soldierlike, and stern ; your gentleness
Would crush this little life. What canst thou do
With her whose bed hath been of silks and down,—
Whose food were delicates,—whose rosy beauty
Nought harder than a kiss hath ever touched ?
It is not true,—tell me it is not true !

MARTINO.

So true, that I shall take what you refuse me,
If you refuse it longer than my leave.

GRISELDA.

Keep off! I had forgotten : it is true !

Stand there, sir ; you shall have her—take her—so.

(*Gives the child.*)

MARTINO.

'Tis well ! thou dost this wisely ; and I go.

Pardon the needful pain.

GRISELDA.

Oh ! stay, good sergeant.

(*Sweet angels make me strong !*) Thou askest pardon,

Thou shalt have thanks ; render me back my child.

MARTINO.

Nay, madam !

GRISELDA.

But a minute,—she is thine.

Hath he not so commanded ? Ah ! dear love,

Lie back a breathing space upon this breast—
Thy home no more—thy home and life no more!
My little sleeping girl—my silent daughter!
To-night thou diest for the fault of me,
Thine o'er-fond mother. Therefore, pretty one!—
Aye, smile on so—even as thy father smiled,
And I shall get the heart to say the word,—
Therefore, farewell,—farewell! and let me take
Thine earthly sorrows off with this last kiss:
Thy soul, my little child, is His to have
Who died upon the cross, whereof in token
I sign thee with the sign. Take! here again,
Good sergeant, your young maid.

MARTINO.

I pity you,
And thank you, good my lady.

GRISELDA.

You are courteous

In an ungentle task. If, at the least,
My lord forbade you not, out of your grace
Bury this small slight body in some grave
Where birds and beasts shall miss it.

[*Exit MARTINO with Child.*

Ah, Lenette!

He answers not, but goes.

LENETTE.

Dear mistress—cry!

If thou dost feel it, cry upon this wrong,
Let him not part so! I will after him
And bring him back. Oh! let me go!

GRISELDA.

Stay here!

It is no wrong,—he doth it to his own;
Let not thy love lose mine, blaming my lord.
Look to the little Prince, and take these hence,—

Their work is done, and well. I will away ;
She shall not see me weep—none shall,—but God !

[*Exit* GRISELDA.

SCENE III.

An Apartment in the Palace. The MARQUIS alone.

MARQUIS.

Now is the first fear present. If she stands,—
If all go as I think—she shall build up
Honour for me, and for her sex a name,
Better than did the best ; proud ones, who scorned,
Hearing her swear the oath, shall live to hear
How my brave peasant-queen could keep her word.
Yet is contentment wise ; and if she fail,
My love goes with her courage.

Enter MARTINO.

Thou didst my message yester night ?

MARTINO.

Aye! my lord.

MARQUIS.

She gave it patiently?

MARTINO.

When she was certified of my warrant, she rendered it without complaint. There was a piteous sorrow of the eye and a working with the lip, that shook me wondrously. I had liever do thy next message to my lord's enemies than to my lord's lady.

MARQUIS.

Thou art not less worthy; but did she question my will in nothing?

MARTINO.

Not a whit. I delivered myself roughly as thou

badest, which she rather bore with gentleness, as in my office, than put off with resentment.

MARQUIS.

She gave it thee for the death ?

MARTINO.

I led her plainly to that thinking ; in the heart of which sorrow she took comfort, for the little one smiled, she said, after thy fashion, and sweetly bade her despatch.

MARQUIS.

Rare Lady ! Look now ! The trustiest one of thy following hath this pretty one in charge ; let her be cared for as a king's daughter. After the feast I will appoint thee a time when thou shalt take the boy ; then do thou, with the fleetest horses, bring them to Bologna, my sister's court, to whose care commend them with the scroll I shall give thee.

MARTINO.

My lord, I will.

MARQUIS.

Let this secret meantime be thine and mine only.
Go now, and let one of her women desire for me
the Lady Griselda's presence. [*Exit* MARTINO.

She'll not fail!

No! no! she shall be as a precious gem
Found on a desolate and savage shore,
Whose lustre lay with none to marvel at it,
Lost on the sands; till I, a voyager,
All love-struck with its light, did beat my way
O'er perilous seas, through danger and through
 doubt,
To bring my jewel to the farther world,
Every beholder's wonder. She is coming,
I'll try if she can keep her sorrow still.

Enter GRISELDA.

GRISELDA.

You sent for me, my lord! What is your will?

MARQUIS.

Nay, I know not! I'm sick and sad, Griselda;
Look that thou make me merry.

GRISELDA.

Will love do it?

I'll sit and soothe thee to forgetfulness;
Or lay thy head upon my heart, and keep
With wifely kisses all thy grief away:
They have a charm to do it.

MARQUIS.

No! not that,
I should soon weary thee.

GRISELDA.

Art thou ill here?

I'll bind my kerchief round about thy brow.
Art heart-sick? I will fetch the virginals,
I have some skill thereon,—thou saidst it once,
And play a measure that I love to play
When I am sad.

MARQUIS.

Nay, then, I think, Griselda,
'T were all as well for thee to play it now ;
Thine eyes are red with weeping ; thy face shows
Paler than mine. Go to ! here have been tears ;
I see all down the whiteness of thy cheek
'The path they went. How is it ?

GRISELDA.

I am sad,
If thou art so ; my visage is deject,
If thine lose cheer : is this a wonder, Walter ?
Good sooth, it should not be.

MARQUIS.

Aye! thou art right,
Doubtless I erred. Come then! Sith thou art well,
Tell me a story of some wileful lady,
Who paid her tyrannous lord with scathe and scorn
In the high Eastern style. I love to hear
How well they smiled and stabbed.

GRISELDA.

I never learned one.
I know a story of a lowly lady
Who gave her heart away, and with her heart
Its pains and pleasures, keeping but enough
To ponder how she gave it.

MARQUIS.

So do I;
That tale is old, as we are. Well then! play
This doleful lay of thine.

(GRISELDA *plays, and falls asleep.*)

MARQUIS.

Lo! my sweet leech
Medicines herself. Sleep! thou art kindly come,
Keep thy soft fingers on her lids awhile.

*(He takes the instrument from her hands and
bends over her.)*

Last night thou couldst not close them for her tears.
What have we here, worn with such curious care?
I never saw it yet—a golden curl
Cut from her child.—Sweet! thou must add another,
And crop a silken fillet from thy boy,
If these be worn for lost ones. How she sleeps,
Poor weary Niobe! I've heard it said
That, sleeping so, they'll answer asking ones,
As if the soul spake to the catechist
With all its truth, soul-like and solemnly.
I'll make the trial. Hearest thou, Griselda?
No answer!—Lo! they take thy child from thee.

(She sighs.)

Oh! aye! that reaches to her heart asleep.

I'll try anew !—This daughter that is lost,
Didst thou, Griselda, love her very well ?

GRISELDA (*faintly, and in her sleep.*)

Yes !

MARQUIS.

It was Lord Walter took thy girl from thee ;
Thou wilt not love this Walter any more ?

GRISELDA.

I will.

MARQUIS.

But thou dost dote upon thy bonny lad ;
And where the sister is, the brother goes,
And I shall send him : wilt thou love me then ?

(*She sighs.*)

Say ! wilt thou love me then ?

GRISELDA.

Yes! very well.

MARQUIS.

Excellent patience! I do think thou wouldst;
Yet am I sore, sweetheart, to tempt thee thus.
Grant me for what is done, and shall be yet,
Sweetly thy sleeping pardon. Didst thou wake,
Thou'dst see me kneel for it, and set seal to it
Here on the gracious lips that grant it me.
So then I'll put this treasure back; and now
Open tired eyes again!

(He plays the same strain louder, till she wakes.)

GRISELDA.

Ah me! my lord!

MARQUIS.

What is it, good my lady?

GRISELDA.

Sooth I am
A slothful nurse to sleep upon my charge ;
How gott'st thou that my music ?

MARQUIS.

Even thus ;
Your ladyship sank to a sudden sleep,
Medicined with this same melody, whereat
I tried its potency.

GRISELDA.

Thou mockest me.

MARQUIS.

No ! not a whit. I grieve my little skill
Trifled too loudly with the strings, and so
Broke on thy pleasant slumber.

GRISELDA.

Oh! not pleasant,—

I dreamed my boy was dead.

MARQUIS.

Ha! didst thou so?

Sometimes these dreams come for bewilderment,—
Sometimes for warning,—sometimes that the heart
May gather strength before the tempest comes.

GRISELDA.

What tempest, Walter?

MARQUIS.

Trial, good my wife,—
Trial that strikes adown the steady soul,
Unless it look to stand.

GRISELDA.

It was not that,

Nor yet a common dream, for being sad,
It ended with strange joy.—Art thou sick now?

MARQUIS.

No; 'twas a passing ailment. Thou wilt grace
Our tourney, sweet?

GRISELDA.

Aye! if it please thee so.

MARQUIS.

It doth; the knights are mated,—let us go
And see what spears are come.

GRISELDA.

Lord! as thou wilt.

SCENE IV.

The Anti-chamber of the Palace.

ANTONIO, BERTOLO, BERTRAM, *Lords and Ladies.*

BERTOLO.

He hath done her grievous wrong.

BERTRAM.

Aye! and she so holy-mannered! I have touched string before every Queen from Naples to Toulouse, but none hath a sweeter smile than the Lady Griselda, nor a voice more attuned to music.

BERTOLO.

Aye! that makes the pity; if she needed reclaiming or forgot her feather, there were cause for this. But, in truth, this last grievance is foul.

BERTRAM.

'T is the liker thy talk, Bertolo; if there be no herons in Paradise, thou wilt seek them elsewhere.

BERTOLO.

Not so! thou thing of strings, I should fear to meet thee else. I hate thy preludes and thy virelays worse than the east wind. I marvel how my lady doth thee favour.

BERTRAM.

Thou hast praised her discretion, marvel therefore no longer. But here is my lady's woman, she will tell us more of it. Good mistress Lenette, how went this fair child away?

LENETTE.

I may say this of her going, that she went shamefully; but I may not give more reason for her going than that it was of Lord Walter's policy. He made my lady believe she is not

loved of the people, nor her little ones held worthy of their knees.

BERTOLO.

Why, they saint her,—the hem of her garment draws them after it, like divination and Lapland charms!

BERTRAM.

They get prayers by heart to say for her.

LENETTE.

I would they did pray Heaven to mend her patience; these lords that have gentle ladies do much abuse them.

BERTRAM.

Thine shall never thus err, Lenette.

LENETTE.

Why then, beware thee, Sir Troubadour!

BERTRAM.

I,—nay, I am horribly afraid of thee,—and beside I am not wise enough to wive.

LENETTE.

They should come together, thou sayest,—wisdom and a wife?

BERTRAM.

Aye! the one to rule the other.

LENETTE.

Such conjunction shall not befall thee, therefore wed not. Didst thou see the tilting this morning?

BERTOLO.

Yea, it was my lady's saint's day. Why came she not to the lists?

LENETTE.

Thou wert best ask that of my lord, for he cometh.

Enter MARQUIS and MARTINO. The others go off.

MARQUIS (*to* LENETTE).

Stay, good mistress, where is thy lady?

LENETTE.

She is but now gone to her chamber.

MARQUIS.

Tell her that I come anon. [*Erit* LENETTE.

(*To* MARTINO.) Hast thou the boy?

MARTINO.

Aye, my lord!

MARQUIS.

Thou took'st him privily?

MARTINO.

He is three leagues beyond the river, and none knoweth it but thou!

MARQUIS.

'Tis well; take them both now with thy most careful speed to my sister, as I bade thee: thou dost answer for them with thy life till then.

MARTINO.

Aye, lord.

[*Exit* MARTINO.]

MARQUIS.

Thus are they gone, and all her joy with them.
Nay, and half mine! I have advanced my foot
Too far to fly, yet would I even now
Spare thy tried patience this. Sweet, keep thee firm,
Or both shall fall to-day. [*Exit* MARQUIS.]

SCENE V.

GRISELDA'S *Apartment.* *Enter the MARQUIS to*
GRISELDA.

GRISELDA.

Why didst thou bid me to the tournament,
And send to say, Go not?

MARQUIS.

Because, Griselda,—
It is a woman's answer, but will serve,—
I changed my purpose.

GRISELDA.

And no more, my lord

MARQUIS.

Art not content?

GRISELDA.

I must needs be content ;
My tongue shall never question will of thine ;
But yet my heart should quicker leap to keep it,
So it were sure of love.

MARQUIS.

Why, look you now,
There hath been that, and there will be again,
Whose hard and doubtful doing well might shake
This faith of thine, look that these shake it not.
What such I say and do,—these are to me
Out of avoidance, and thy debt to them
Is an obedient duty ; but thy love,
Be ever sure, is answered worthily.

GRISELDA.

Oh now, do what thou wilt, I'll not think more
Of this same jousting.

MARQUIS.

Dost thou love it so?

GRISELDA.

Nay, 'tis a rare sight when the noble knights,
Death-proof from heel to helm, splinter the spears
Like straws upon their breasts. Oh! when our
 boy
Is grown to man, shall he not, Walter, ride
Like these along the lists,—a star of them?

MARQUIS.

I cannot tell.

GRISELDA.

Not yet, but if he lives?

MARQUIS.

Didst thou not see him dead?

GRISELDA.

Where then, my lord?

MARQUIS.

Why, in thy dreams.

GRISELDA.

Ah! thou didst make me fear.

My prince! I saw him not six hours ago,
Here, sleeping in his bed.

MARQUIS.

Is he there yet?

GRISELDA.

Why, yes,—look thou! He 'll smile to see thee come
With sword and steel cap; he is too like thee
To fear their flash. Look on him now.

MARQUIS.

Look thou!

GRISELDA (*finding the boy gone*).

O God, my child is gone! Lenette! Lenette!
Who took my child,—my son,—my darling?

MARQUIS.

I!

GRISELDA (*after a silence*).

Was it thou, Walter?

MARQUIS.

It was I, my wife!

GRISELDA.

Oh, heart, be still! Why didst thou take my boy?

MARQUIS.

He stood between me and my kingdom's peace:
They would not have the herdsman's daughter's son,
Nor bend a knee to him.

GRISELDA.

Where is he gone ?

MARQUIS.

Even where his sister went.

GRISELDA.

They are both gone !

Both my twin-blossoms ! Ah, lord Walter, both !
Were they thy danger ?

MARQUIS.

Else this were not done ;

Ask what thou wilt, I'll answer.

GRISELDA.

Answer this !

I must pray God to tend those whom I tended.
Shall I pray for the dead ?

MARQUIS.

Pray for thy babes

As for sweet angels thou shalt see again.

GRISELDA.

In heaven, lord?

MARQUIS.

Aye, Madam, there, I hope.

ACT IV.

SCENE I.

GRISELDA'S *Robing-room.*

LENETTE and the women of GRISELDA.

LENETTE.

Lay the robes there, and fetch forth the cinture
and minivers. My Lady weareth none else to-
morrow.

JACINTA.

How knowest thou?

LENETTE.

'Twas her wedding-gear, wench ; and to-morrow is twelve years that she hath needed to weep for wearing them.

JACINTA.

And I could weep to wear them ! 'Twill be a brave show, if it match the glitter of this, Lenette.

LENETTE.

'Tis a fine fashion !

JACINTA.

Dio ! thou sayest but little ;—where throne they to-morrow ?

LENETTE.

In the great hall—all the country is coming to greet my lady.

JACINTA.

She hath graciously earned their greeting.

LENETTE.

Aye! and all the wages that this poor world
pays virtue.

JACINTA.

Bertram told me he had written a song on her
patience.

LENETTE.

If my lord know, he will not sing it twice: but,
in sooth, if pitiful words could stead her, a wrong
should be quickly righted. There is none that hath
not a fair story of her.

JACINTA.

Nay, 'tis so! Shall I set forth these broidures?
—they are marvellous fit.

LENETTE.

Silk vest shroudeth sad breast:—it would dull
thy praise to know what a heart these shall hide.
But my lady cometh soon; do thou take these
hence, Jacinta.

JACINTA.

And these small girdles?—how fine their silver is!

LENETTE.

Let them lie! my lady sayeth ever a prayer for
the little ones they circled; it may be she will take
pleasure to see them.

Enter GRISELDA.

GRISELDA.

My girl! bear hence my service to thy lord—
Tell him I would his steps might this way bend,
His leisure being come. [Exit JACINTA.

What now, Lenette,
Wherefore these gauds?

LENETTE.

Madam, we sought to find
What gems and vesture might least misbecome
Their wearer at the feast.

GRISELDA.

I' the court to-morrow?

LENETTE.

Good lady, yes!

GRISELDA.

I know not that I need them.
The Book saith, Solomon in all his glory
Wore none such raiment as the lilies wear.

LENETTE.

Look! here are silver lilies.

GRISELDA.

Even thus

Their country sisters shame them,

LENETTE.

For a day!

Most wise madonna.

GRISELDA.

Ah! Lenette, Lenette!

Ah! measure nothing by the space it stays!

Who loves not dear delight, though it die soon,

Ended by only being. I'd a dream,—

A very short sweet dream of motherhood,

That died away as summer lilies do.

Oh, Mary Mother! there are twelve years gone,

And none of all their months hath brought a joy

Like what one took away.

LENETTE.

These lilies, madam,
My lord the Marquis gave.

GRISELDA.

Aye ! and the others !
Thou speakest well,—in faith, a pretty thing.

LENETTE.

I mind you said so once.

GRISELDA.

I say so now ;
The more that they bring back to memory,
As the others bring the pleasant sun to mind,
My marriage morning. But I'll wear no
flowers ;—
Lilies grow low, Lenette.

LENETTE.

And all unseen,

GRISELDA.

They toil not,—runs it not so? Yesternight
I won my father from his cottage home
To see my splendours, but he praised them not
Beyond his wont;—he held them all in scorn,
Something too long, whereat I led his steps
Along the terrace. Know'st thou where my vines
Run o'er the garden olives, and the elms,
Hanging their purple berries on strange stems,
And crowning the grave trees like revellers?
We rested there. I said,—These leafy bowers,
These flowers of gold starring a sky of green,—
Is it not dainty fair? Say that of these!
Ah me!—he pointed out between the stalks,
And not an arrow's flight away, there stood
A hut,—about it gleamed those lowly lilies,

• Those lilies clad more gorgeously than kings ;
And underneath its eaves God's pensioner
And man's light friend, the swallow, nested thick ;
And from the vineyard came the goodman home,
Red from his work i' the fruit ; and a low door,
Made lower with the leaves that corniced it,
Gave a young mother and her gold-haired girl
Unto our eyes—whose eyes awaited him :
And all the happy circumstance of this,
God's equal sunshine cast a glory on,
And touched it into perfectness and peace ;—
While mine stood in cold shadow.—Girl ! I wept !

LENETTE.

I would you did weep more !

GRISELDA.

Wherefore, Lenette ?

LENETTE.

That so the grief
Which lies a large dark lake within your heart,
Might come in rivers from your yielded eyes
And ease you, madam.

GRISELDA.

Of what load, Lenette?

LENETTE.

A twelve-years' gathered one. Oh pardon me,
Too patient mistress mine,—a load of loss
Crushing the heart that bears it silently.

GRISELDA.

Art thou not bold? how knowest thou what I bear?

LENETTE.

Less loving eyes and leal know what I know,
Thy mirror sees it, and the tell-tale breeze,

Finding dead lilies where young roses were,
Goes past thy sad face sighing.

GRISELDA.

By my crown!—

LENETTE.

I speak the truth,—else dared I not to speak;
Nay, frown on me, but be as I am bold;
Say with thine eyes that thy life dies for lack
Of what these girdles rounded.

(*Showing them to GRISELDA.*)

GRISELDA.

Ah! sweet souls!

Give them me here, where gott'st them?

[*She takes the girdles, and kneeling down, covers them with kisses. The MARQUIS meantime enters, who motions to LENETTE to leave the apartment, remaining unseen to GRISELDA till she rises.*

GRISELDA.

I did not mean thou shouldst have seen me weep?

MARQUIS.

And wherefore weepest thou?

GRISELDA.

For what is not,

And cannot be, and therefore foolishly.

MARQUIS.

Thy tears are wet upon these silver zones :

Wherefore ?

GRISELDA.

Am I to speak ?

MARQUIS.

If it shall please you

GRISELDA.

Our children that are gone these twelve years wore
them.

MARQUIS.

Grievest thou them gone with grief a twelve-years
old?

GRISELDA.

Aye, lord! I must.

MARQUIS.

How fits thine oath with that?

GRISELDA.

Faithfully still,—my sorrow murmurs not.

MARQUIS.

I knew not that it lived.

GRISELDA.

Thou hadst not known
But for this chance.

MARQUIS.

Now knowing, was it well
To cover sadness with a cheek serene,
And smile me back my smiles?

GRISELDA.

Aye! very well.

MARQUIS.

Give me the toys.— Why then, thou lovedst thy
babes?

GRISELDA.

Thou shalt have answer, lord. I loved my life,—
The pleasant air I breathed, the stretching skies,—
God's gracious summer, with its fruits and flowers,

Fine sounds, fair sights,—earth's every circumstance,

As a most happy woman and a wife

Might in her May-time: but, with heart and mind

Ten times more fast and set, I loved those twain.

MARQUIS.

And yet thou gav'st them?

GRISELDA.

Yes! thee I loved more!

MARQUIS.

I think it. Wherefore sent'st thou?

GRISELDA.

If I might,

To know what care keeps thee these two months
pale.

Hast thou that news from Rome thou didst look for?

MARQUIS.

Why yes, my girl! to-morrow in the hall
Thou shalt thyself deliver it; none else
So fitly, as I think. Come with me now.

SCENE II.

The Presence Chamber.

Courtiers, &c., BERTRAM, BERTOLO, LENETTE,
JACINTA, ANTONIO, &c.

BERTRAM.

Will they not come? Who'll go a voyage for
tidings?

JACINTA.

I for one.

BERTRAM.

And I; one and one make two.

BERTOLO.

An thou dost so readily multiply, one and one shall make three.

ANTONIO. ·

Nay, he was ever quick at numbers,—'tis his vocation.

BERTRAM.

Heed them not, Jacinta.

JACINTA.

I!—I speak with my cheeks.

ANTONIO.

Aye, so they grow roses; may a man touch at these, and defy rain.

JACINTA (*striking him*).

So he fear not the thunder.

BERTRAM.

Ha! ha! by my lute, well stormed!

ANTONIO.

Swarest thou by cat-gut?

BERTRAM.

Aye, a string of oaths, that of thee spake the wise
Arnaultz:—

More foolish than fat,

And more feeble than that.

(He thrums his guitar.)

ANTONIO.

Hast thou more of like matter?

BERTRAM.

Needs it?

ANTONIO.

Aye, to sing thyself into a fever with—then if thou lackest leech, I will blood thee.

BERTRAM.

Wilt thou? thy fee shall be the fee-simple of thy length in land.

LENETTE.

Sirs, my lady cometh, let this end.

BERTOLO.

Certes! it were ill brawling, and she so gentle.

ANTONIO.

I sheathe my tongue.

BERTRAM.

And I:—are they at hand?

LENETTE.

Do you not see the people how they press her for a smile? They have but one voice for her name, and one heart to bless it.

ANTONIO.

Yet she smileth little.

LENETTE.

For the very good cause meseems, that she hath none.

JACINTA.

Thou sayest it!—the Marquis looketh but ill pleased.

LENETTE.

He hath nought in this greeting, and liketh it nought; but they enter.

Enter MARQUIS, GRISELDA, and Attendants, amid the rejoicing of the people.

OMNES.

Health to the lady Griselda! [PIETRO *kneels*.

GRISELDA.

Why kneel'st thou, good Pietro?

PIETRO.

To lay in loving words the people's greeting
At thy kind feet.

GRISELDA (*raising him*).

Thus let me lift it then
As high as to my heart.
(*To FREDERIGO, a Courtier*) And wherefore thou?

FREDERIGO.

Long time ago I spake ill things of thee,
Which sin thy gentle pity punished most,—
I sue for pardon, where these have thy love.

GRISELDA.

Thanks for thy bettered thought, if thou lack'st
mine,
Keep thy heart light, good friend !

OMNES.

Long live our lady !

MARQUIS.

Lords and leal hearts, my lady hath no phrase
To stead her gratefulness, but she doth mind,
Some half-score summers back this very day,
Fair Sirs ! how stiffly your joints bent to her :
Sweet dames ! how scornfully ye crown'd the braids,
Whose tiring-women were but Health and Youth :
Sith she stands better ; let this late-got grace
Make a late-given thing not less a gift.

OMNES.

Long live lord Walter !

MARQUIS *to* GRISELDA.

I prithee play the clerk;
Thou bad'st me tell thee my last news from Rome.

BERTOLO (*aside*).

A revel, I warrant ye.

LENETTE.

Or a tourney.

ANTONIO.

Three days' fiesta, and the fountains to run wine.

BERTOLO.

Nay 'tis a bull; mark but the broad sigil of it.

BERTRAM.

Baccho! what cometh?

ANTONIO.

Hold thy peace! she reads.

[GRISELDA *first glances at the paper and extends it doubtfully to the MARQUIS, who signs command. She descends slowly from her throne, and taking off her crown lays it at WALTER'S feet.*

GRISELDA.

Good friends! our Holy Father,
Who hath on earth the keys to bind and loose,
Doth herein freely
Loose our most noble lord and this fair state
From an unworthy wife and unfit lady.

(They raise a confused murmur of discontent.)

Nay, let me end;—and lest this palace lack
A queenly presence, and Saluzzo's house
For lack of young ones fail——

MARQUIS.

Canst not thou read?

GRISELDA.

Aye, Sir!—it granteth leave and faculty
Of a fresh spousal and new wedding vows,
None other hindrance letting than the old.

(She returns the paper.)

MARQUIS.

Why so? ye scowl upon me, and your hands
Play with your dagger-hilts; ye bade me wive,
I took a wife; ye held her all too base
To breed you kings, I sent them elsewhere
Those that she bore: now will I for your loves
Marry me royally, what would ye else?

[*To* GRISELDA.

Certes, Griselda, it was pleasance dear
To call thee wife, not I from what I chose
Sunder my heart; but what a serf holds safe
A king must love and lose,—and, sooth to say,
She that shall have thy place is distant hence
Only a two-days' stage.

GRISELDA.

The high God guard her !
It shall be void ! (*After a pause.*) It may be that
a queen
Should speak a braver speech to keep a crown,
But I,—ah memory ! I think not on that,
Something I need to say. Thou ledd'st me here ;
In show thy equal wife, in heart thy servant,—
Thy mindful servant. And so have I been ;
And so I thank thee now for thy long love,
And so—I yield it.

MARQUIS.

Why then ! this goes well !
As thou art patient-hearted, take with thee,
I give it of my grace, what dower ye brought me.

GRISELDA.

Thou wottest, Walter, that I brought thee none.
My lord, why sayest thou that ? this ring is thine,
Ah, the good God ! how gentle and how kind

Thou wert that day ; these braveries be thine,—
Rich gifts of lost love, here I render them,—
And this,—and these ; they have no lustre less,
'Tis love that is not old, as when 'tis new.
The remnant of your jewels ready be,
I kept them safe, as I kept all sweet words,
And looks, and thoughts of thine ; only these last
Are heart-stores, and I cannot render them ;
The others thou shalt have, for with them all
Ye decked me of your grace ; but for the dower,
Sooth of my bringing, there is none to take ;
For faith, and first-love, and my maiden name,
And what poor praise my village beauty had,
Came with me here, and I shall leave them here ;
And beside these, I had not—save the weeds
They stripped me of, long lost : my robes are there,
(She takes off her velvet gown and mantle.)
But these are thine, I am so wholly thine
That thou canst shame me, taking what is thine ;
Yet out of pity, for dear honour's sake,
Give one gift more, and let me not go hence

Smockless. They are not here to speak for me,
Yet I did bear thee children. Ah, good lord!
It cannot be thy will,—though 'tis thy word,—
To send their mother gazed at from thy gate,
Naked and shamed.

MARQUIS.

The smock upon thy back
Let it rest there, and bear it forth with thee.

[*Exit* MARQUIS.]

PIETRO.

By our lady, this shall not go thus!

OMNES.

No, no!

LENETTE.

Madam! Madam! take again thy crown.

OMNES.

Aye, it shall not off!

ANTONIO.

Oh! thou noble patience, oh my idle blade!
Good lady! let me draw it.

OMNES.

Out blades all,
She shall be only queen!

GRISELDA.

Good people, peace!
Thou wearest that steel to guard thy lord, Antonio.
Lenette take these, and see the jewels safe.
I thank you all, I thank you much. Farewell!

[*Exit* GRISELDA, *the people following.*

SCENE III.

JANICOLA'S Cottage.

JANICOLA *stooping over the embers of a fire. Enter*

GRISELDA, *who walks to the press, and takes from its place her old gown and kirtle, stoops over her father and kisses him on the cheek; and then takes the herbs that are beside him and finishes the preparation of his meal. She places it before him, while he looks fixedly on her. Then she fetches her spinning-wheel, and, sitting down, begins to spin.*

JANICOLA *at last speaks slowly.*

If thou art come from heaven,—a white angel,
To stead me so, why thou art come in time.
I am nigh gone with age, and lack of sight
Of my scorned daughter; but if thou art she
These should be silks,—or is it all not so,
And no years gone?

GRISELDA.

Sir, there are twelve years gone
Since I did tend thee here, and I am come
To tend thee here again.

JANICOLA.

Hath not one else
A right to that and thee?

GRISELDA.

Not now.

JANICOLA.

Why, girl?

GRISELDA.

My lord doth wed again.

JANICOLA.

Wedded, and wed!

Oh, Cross of Christ ! art come to tell me this ?
Is't not enough that he hath slain thy brats ?
Give me my arblast ! Oh, these old grey hairs !
I looked for this all the gay tinselled time ;
But he shall answer it.

GRISELDA.

Dear father, patience !

JANICOLA.

For him !

GRISELDA.

For me ! thou shalt know all anon.
Now take thy sleep as thou wert wont ; we've time
To weep beside to-day : why I could dream
That all was dreaming, and that long ago
Was now, and this same thread, the thread I spun
My wedding-morning, and the song I sang
Fit to sing now. I'll try,—rest thee, dear head ?

(*She sings.*)

*On a mountain
Rose a fountain,
Sweet and quiet, and crystal clear to see,
Till it bubbled,
Sorely troubled,
And a merry, roving streamlet longed to be.*

*So a splashing,
And madly dashing,
Over the rocks it ran afar from home ;
And sought ever
To be a river,
The farther and the faster it did roam.*

*All the daughters
Of the waters
Their brimming urns of willing ripples lent ;
And away then,
With wave and spray then,
Longing to grow a sea, the wanderer went.*

*Ah! the pity,
To end a ditty
With alack-a-day! and with a sad alas!
But the river
Was gone for ever,
When out into the salt sea it did pass.*

[*She rises and stands watching JANICOLA,
while the scene closes.*

ACT V.

SCENE I.

JANICOLA'S *Cottage.*

JANICOLA is discovered lying on a pallet dead.

GRISELDA enters, bearing a flask of wine,
accompanied by LENETTE, both in peasant
clothes.

GRISELDA.

The wine will bring him strength; the good God
thank them

Who gave so freely of their little store!

Father! look up!

LENETTE.

He is asleep, Madonna!

GRISELDA (*stooping over him, and at last rising slowly*).

Aye; a long sleep, Lenette, girl!—he is dead!
Oh, father, dost thou leave me all alone
In the wide, wild world? Would I were cold with
thee,
For there is no one now,—not one weak help,
To stay the flood of grief, whose knocking waves
Will overflow my soul! Angels of God,
Bear him to blessed rest, and make me strong
For earth's unquiet remnant!

(*While she mourns silently, enter ANTONIO, PIETRO,
and BERTRAM. LENETTE motions them to be still.*)

GRISELDA (*rising*).

What would you, Sirs, with me?

PIETRO MALA.

We bear an unwelcome message; if we offend in
our coming we will await thy occasion.

GRISELDA.

I will hear what it shall please you.

PIETRO MALA.

Thou hast yonder other duties, Madam !

GRISELDA.

God hath acquitted me of them :—thou mayest speak.

ANTONIO.

He is dead, good lady ?

GRISELDA.

Aye, Sir !

BERTRAM.

Oh, signors, let us bear back our charge,—now is no time to tell Lord Walter's will !

GRISELDA.

Bring ye aught from my Lord ?

PIETRO MALA.

Yea, if thou wilt take it; if not, the fault of
silence shall be on us.

GRISELDA.

Now, and presently,
All times alike of mine are his; kind hearts,
Who keep unfashioned constancy, speak on;
I have some stock of sufferance.

ANTONIO.

He bids us deliver—that which spoken by
another should make matter for blood. Do thou
tell it, Pietro!

GRISELDA.

What is it stays you?
I am too low for scorn to lower me,
And all too sorrow-stricken to feel grief:
Why, say it then, Pietro!

PIETRO MALA.

There is coming from Bologna she who shall be my lord's lady, and the trumpets' mouths are to speak the greeting that none else will. Moreover, the palace is to wear a new face, and there is gold and velvets, and I know not what braveries, for its bedecking.

GRISELDA.

My lord had ever a free hand.

PIETRO MALA.

In which matters he holdeth no wit rarer than thine, and he bids thee betake thyself to his house, and make ready the chambers to a queen's liking.

GRISELDA.

Say that I will!

[*Exeunt* ANTONIO, &c.]

He might have spared this last!

I know not that I can. Oh, false and cruel!

Now hold of my soul, thou lovedst me not.
Were it not well to shame his marriage-show,
And let dumb patience cry?—

LENETTE.

Oh, well! most well!

GRISELDA.

To turn the new wife's laughter into tears
With the old one's story!—

LENETTE:

Oh, most well and just!

GRISELDA.

Aye, and to lay my hand upon her crown,
And break my oath, telling him he broke his!—

LENETTE.

Oh, do it!—others, Madam——

GRISELDA.

Why so, girl?

A hundred other tongues will help my tongue,
And back my sighs with swords.

LENETTE.

Oh, do so! do so!

GRISELDA.

Yet did he make one year of life all joy,
And what he took was his. I am not come
Of blood enough to mate him for his throne,
With hot mad words, and wrestle down his will!
Oh, but I think I love him even now
Too well to wish him speed,—and yet too well
Not to work all his will. Girl, I will go!

LENETTE.

Even as my lady please.

GRISELDA.

Thy lady, sooth!

Thy lady wore a crown, went daintily,
Wedded a lord ;— and I, I am a wench
With kitchen work to do, and a dead father
To put away into a peasant's grave.
Ah, thou didst die in time ! Come, we'll away,
And end our mourning by this marriage-day !

SCENE II.

The Presence Chamber.

Servants of the Palace, JACINTA, &c.

FIRST SERVANT.

Saw any the company come in yester eve ?

SECOND SERVANT.

That did I !

FIRST SERVANT.

And the maiden to whom Lord Walter plighteth
faith ?

SECOND SERVANT.

She rode first of them, with her boy brother.

FIRST SERVANT.

What favour hath she?

SECOND SERVANT.

Mine, be she white or brown, for in truth I marked not that,—her beauty is for worship, not for weighing.

FIRST SERVANT.

Is it so rare?

SECOND SERVANT.

There be redder lips and brighter eyes than she hath, but no such lip and eye.

THIRD SERVANT.

What years hath she?

SECOND SERVANT.

She hath but counted thirteen. My lord must wait yet for the maiden he betroths.

Enter JACINTA.

JACINTA.

Why idle ye all here, and the tapestries unspread? will ye leave all the work to her?

FIRST SERVANT.

Who then?

JACINTA.

She that was worthily your mistress!

SECOND SERVANT.

Nay, we knew not——

JACINTA.

She is coming hither for your services!

SERVANTS.

We will render them gladly.

Enter GRISELDA, *in the attire of a servant.*

The others bend and uncover.

GRISELDA.

I pray you regard me in nothing but your good wills: I bade them bring hither the flowers: see to it, my girl, and have them scattered. Jacinta, tell the seneschal that my lord drinks to-day in the emerald beaker. Wherefore is not the cloth of gold laid,—and the canopy?

SERVANTS.

We will see it done, my lady!

GRISELDA.

Thanks, for they come anon.

Enter Gentleman of the PRINCESS.

Would you aught, sir?

GENTLEMAN.

With you, I think. I pray you, are you she who hath my lady's lodging in charge?

GRISELDA.

Even so.

GENTLEMAN.

She would thank you herself if your occasion serves.

GRISELDA.

I will attend her. [*Exit* GRISELDA.

(The servants are busied in completing the preparations.)

GENTLEMAN (*to* JACINTA).

How name you her to whom I made my message?

JACINTA.

Griselda.

GENTLEMAN.

She hath a noble bearing !

JACINTA.

What she hath well learned in twelve years, a week hath hardly untaught her !

GENTLEMAN.

Hath she been better than a servant ?

JACINTA.

She hath been served of a hundred servants,—
Lord Walter's wife.

GENTLEMAN.

And he hath brought her to this ?

JACINTA.

Thou seest !

*Enter GRISELDA and the PRINCESS,
talking together.*

PRINCESS.

I know I weary you.

GRISELDA.

No, not a whit!

PRINCESS.

Oh, then speak still to me. I do not know
Wherefore I love your voice, and look at you ;
Nor why you seem so like one of my dreams,—
One I dreamed long ago.—Do you love me
In these three minutes so ?

GRISELDA.

I must not say

How well, being a servant.

PRINCESS.

Art thou so ?

GRISELDA.

Yes! my sweet mistress.

PRINCESS.

Oh! that must not be.

I shall be queen, thou knowest; when I am queen,
Thou shalt be next me ever: wilt thou?

GRISELDA.

Nay!

Thou wilt have other tendance.

PRINCESS.

Oh, no! no!

Lord Walter will say yea to what I ask,
And what I ask for first will be for thee.
Is he not gentle?—they did tell me so.

GRISELDA.

They told thee very truth.

PRINCESS.

Then, hast thou seen him?

GRISELDA.

Yes, lady.

PRINCESS.

In the Court?

GRISELDA.

Yes.

PRINCESS.

Art thou then

One of his following?

GRISELDA.

I was so once.

PRINCESS.

And not so now! Oh, you look pale and sad,

And I shall be so, if I weary you ;
Stand here by me, and tell me all the names
Of these brave knights and ladies.

Enter MARQUIS with the PRINCE, Lords, Ladies, &c.
He advances to where the PRINCESS is seated.

MARQUIS (*kissing her hands*).

Sweet one, I pray thee take my love with this :
I and my house are thine. Please you to think
That these poor fineries bid you welcome here.

PRINCESS.

How shall I give you thanks ?

MARQUIS.

By thinking them
Worth but your slightest. Wilt thou, fair one, now
Grace our slight feast ?

*(He takes her hand, a flourish of trumpets,
and they seat themselves in place.)*

PRINCE (*to the PRINCESS*).

Whom spake you with, sister?

PRINCESS.

When?

PRINCE.

At our entering,—she gazes on us now,—who is
she?

PRINCESS.

With the sad kind face—oh! thou wilt love her.

PRINCE.

Nay! I do.

(*The banquet proceeds, and the wine
is poured round.*)

MARQUIS (*rising*).

Fill to the beaded rims, and let no lip

Bend to the wine, that hath not shaped a prayer,
And said a welcome, for the fair young faces
That ask your love.—What ho ! Griselda girl,
Brim me a beaker with the Cypriot ;
No lesser liquor than the king of wines
Befits our pledge.

GRISELDA *fills a cup and presents it. The MARQUIS
drinks, and, turning round, addresses her.*

Griselda,
How liketh thee my wife ? Seem these young roses
Fair enough for a lord to wear at heart ?

GRISELDA.

Right so, my lord ; for in good faith and truth,
A fairer saw I never one than she ;
I pray they wither not : I pray to God
To send you both of his good grace delights,
And pleasance, and fair fortunes, and long loves,
Unto your life's end.

(None speak. GRISELDA turns to the PRINCESS.)

Thou bad'st me tell thee what I was at Court,
Fair mistress mine. I was what thou wilt be.
There were some few did love me,—for my sake
I bid them love my sweet supplanter so !

(GRISELDA turns to the MARQUIS.)

I shall not speak again. Let me say this,
I do beseech you, and I humbly warn,
That, as ye have this tender maiden ta'en,
Ye try her not ; nor grieve her tenderness.
I pray you think I say it of true heart,
For your dear peace. She is not like as I,—
She hath been fostered with high nourishing
More daintily ; and to my thinking, lord,
She might not all adversity endure,
As could a poorly fostered peasant-girl !

*(The MARQUIS starts from his seat, and embraces
her with passionate fondness.)*

MARQUIS.

This is enough ! Griselda mine ! end fear,
Die doubt ! Oh, now my heart hath room to beat !
Oh, sorely, surely tried,—oh, great of heart ;
Oh, noble wifely patience,—now I know
That nothing breaks it ! Brave heart, pardon me !

(GRISELDA *is speechless and amazed.*)

Oh, dost thou doubt me yet ?
Griselda, by the God that for us died,
Thou art my wife ! no leave to change I had,
Nor wished for ; so God save me ! This fair child
Is daughter of thy body, and this boy
Her twin-born brother ! See, I kept them safe !
They were at Padua,—oh, not dead !—not dead !
Take them with twelve years' beauty more than
when
Thou gavest them me. And let no man bethink
Ill of this deed,—it was not idly done ;
But for to try thee in thy womanhood,
And guerdon thee and me !

(GRISELDA *falls down swooning, then recovering, calls to her children, and piteously embraces them.*)

GRISELDA.

God thank it you! God thank it you, sweet lord!
That you have saved me so my children dear!
I reckon not to be dead now these are here,
And I stand in your love! My tender ones,
Your woeful mother weened that cruel hounds
Had eaten you! But God, of his good will,
And your good father's love, hath kept you well!
Kiss me! cling both to me!

(*She swoons again, and they separate her children from her arms with difficulty.*)

MARQUIS.

Bring here the crown.—

So: let it sit again upon its place!

Raise her! aye, thus! and bring the ermines here,
Robe her, as she was robed!

Peace all, she moves!

Speak to her, children!

PRINCE.

Mother!

PRINCESS.

Mother dear!

GRISELDA (*faintly*).

Oh me! as if clear angel-voices called
My soul back out of death, and bade it live,
Sound those two tongues. Where am I? who are
these?

MARQUIS.

Knowest thou not? ah, thou knowest! comfort
thee;

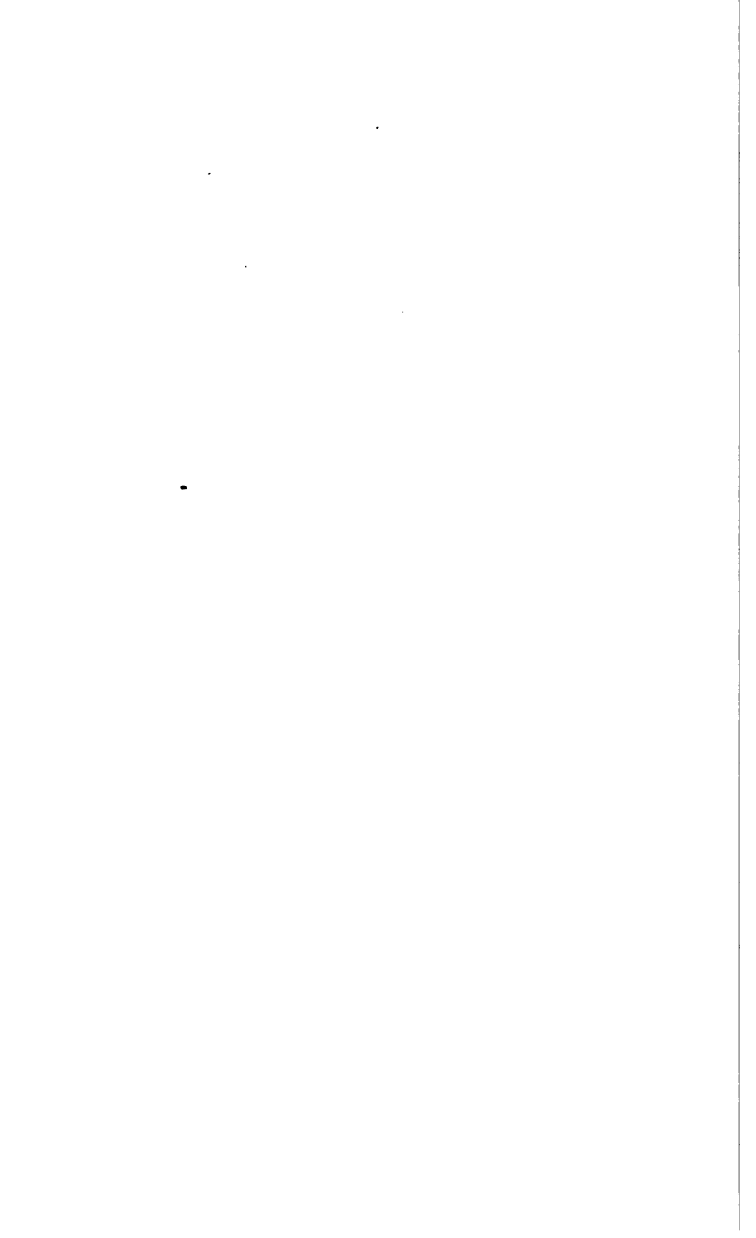
Fear not to loose them ! 'tis not losing them !

Sit there ! Now, trumpets, tell the story out ;

A noble wife doth win her own again !

Patience is crowned !

*(A flourish of trumpets, the people shout, and the
Scene closes.)*



OCCASIONAL POEMS.



CONGRATULATORY ADDRESS.

*(Recited in the Sheldonian Theatre at Oxford, on the
Installation of the Earl of Derby.)*

Διακρίσειν γιλάσσεια.

THRICE welcome to the seat thy worth hath won,
Proud in her grief sad Isis hails her son ;
Welcome ! but question not the tear that starts
From the sealed sorrow of a thousand hearts.
Welcome ! but ask not why in Sheldon's hall
The voice must falter, and the greeting fall ;
Greeting as warm, and joy as deep and proud,
As though that greeting and that joy were loud,
And faith as firm, and love as true we bear,
Though Past and Present mingle smile and tear :
We weave two wreaths, we twine two garlands now ;
One of bright olive for thine honoured brow,

And one of cypress for the mighty dust,
Who is our memory, as Thou our trust :
And therefore mourn we, therefore we rejoice,
Shaping glad welcomes with a saddened voice,
Because to-day great Arthur's seat we see
Vacant of him,—held worthily of thee.

Sad and remindful task it were to say
What hope and gladness graced the festal day,
When, diademed with victory's brightest bays,
As knight that entereth after herald's praise,
Hither he came ; whose fame had come before
From Spain's sierras, and the Belgic shore ;
When Learning's self, forgetting doubt and dread,
Unclasped the helmet from her warrior's head,
Ungirt the good steel sword his thigh displayed,
And wiped the bloody honour from its blade :
Nor held unfitting, nor unworthy thought
The gentle work her timid fingers wrought,
For holiest is the war that winneth peace,
And best the strife that biddeth striving cease.

And now, (alas, but for our hopes in thee
Too sad and mindful were such memory !)
The sword that stayed not till the fight was won,
The heart that failed not till the right was done ;
Firm heart and faithful sword, their work is o'er,
And the great Captain resteth evermore.

But Peace hath victories of deed and word,
Won with a subtler weapon than the sword :
And civic wreaths a greener gleam display
Than the stained garlands of the finished fray.
Peace hath her battle-fields, where they who fight
Win more than honour, vanquish more than might,
And strive a strife against a fiercer foe
Than one who comes with battle-axe and bow,
And this was thine ! War's tempest was away,
Leaving thy destinies a fairer day ;
The eagles slept, the lion-flags were furled,
No battle-thunder shook the weary world,
No steel-clad legions, merciless of mood,
Stained the sweet meadows with their master's blood ;

But Peace, yet bleeding from the lance of War,
And Trust, and Truth, and Plenty, frightened far,
Learning, uplooking from her lettered scroll,
And Science, starting at the drum's deep roll,
And angry Justice, with white spreading wings,
Leaving for ever earth and earthly things ;
These to win back, to comfort, and to calm,
Till War's wild pæan sank to peaceful psalm,
And English homes, untenanted no more,
Held hopes, and loves, and laughter, as before ;
Senates to sway, and councillors to lead,
With earnest eloquence and ready deed,
And, sailing o'er a deep and dangerous flood,
To watch one guiding-star, thy country's good.
To hold to honour, for dear honour's sake,
Till Faction envied what it might not shake,
The right to succour, and the wrong subdued ;—
This was thy triumph, this thy Waterloo !
Well through that bloodless fight thy virtue bore
The Stanley's banner, stainless as of yore,

The silver shield that wears no trait'rous blot,
The legend of the faith that changes not.*

Then once again, glad welcome ! once again
Joy dries the tear, and Pleasures banish Pain ;
The stream-girt city of the tower and dome
Bids thee brave welcome to thine early home,—
Thou hear'st from tongue to tongue the greetings
borne,
Where thy first laurel-wreath was won and worn :
Here, in an old and well-remembered scene,—
Here, where thy verse hath rung, thy voice hath
been,
Oxford, who sent thee forth, receives in pride,
Once her young son, now her grown guard and guide ;
Bold in thy love, and steadfast in thy strength,
Hope hath won memory to smile at length :—
Only in other days, if need there be,
To tell our grief for him, our love for thee,

* The motto of the Stanley family is "*Sans changer.*"

Be this the sign:—that when we sorrowed most,
Mourning at once our Bulwark and our Boast,
To solace best a sad and anxious grief,
And best to honour England's buried chief,
We chose no meaner name, no lower line
To grace his seat, and guard her fame, than thine.

VERNIER.

If ever thou shalt follow silver Seine
 Through his French vineyards and French villages,
 Oh ! for the love of pity turn aside
 At Vernier, and bear to linger there—
 The gentle river doth so — lingering long
 Round the dark moorland, and the pool Grand'mer,
 And then with slower ripple steals away
 Down from his merry Paris. Do thou this ;
 'Tis kind and piteous to bewail the dead, —
 The joyless, sunless dead ; and these lie there,
 Buried full fifty fathoms in the pool,
 Whose rough dark wave is closed above their grave,
 Like the black cover of an ancient book
 Over a tearful story.

Very lovely

Was Julie de Montargis : even now —
Now that six hundred years are dead with her,
Her village name—the name a stranger hears—
Is, “La plus belle des belles ;”—they tell him yet,
The glossy golden lilies of the land
Lost lustre in her hair ; and that she owned
The noble Norman eye—the violet eye
Almost—so far and fine its lashes drooped,
Darkened to purple : all the country-folk
Went lightly to their work at sight of her
And all their children learned a grace by heart,
And said it with small lips when she went by,
The Lady of the Castle. Very dear
Was all this beauty and this gentleness
Unto her first love and her playfellow,
Roland le Vavasour.

Too dear to leave,

Save that his knightly vow to pluck a palm,
And bear the cross broidered above his heart,

To where upon the cross Christ died for him,
Led him away from loving. But a year,
And they shall meet— alas! to those that joy,
It is a pleasant season, all too short,
Made of white winter and of scarlet spring,
With fireside kisses and sweet summer-nights :
But parted lovers count its minutes up,
And see no sunshine. Julie heeded none,
When she had belted on her Roland's sword,
Buckled his breastplate, and upon her lip
Taken his last long kisses.

Listen now !

She was no light-o'-love, to change and change,
And very deeply in her heart she kept
The night and hour St. Ouen's shrine should see
A true-love meeting. Walking by the pool,
Many a time she longed to wear a wing,
As fleet and white as wore the white-winged gull,
That she might hover over Roland's sails,
Follow him to the field, and in the battle

Keep the hot Syrian sun from dazing him :
High on the turret many an autumn-eve,
When the light, merry swallow tried his plumes
For foreign flight, she gave him messages,—
Fond messages of love, for Palestine,
Unto her knight. What wonder, loving so,
She greeted well the brother that he sent
From Ascalon with spoils— Claude Vavasour ?
Could she do less ?—he had so deft a hand
Upon the mandolin, and sang so well
What Roland did so bravely ; nay, in sooth,
She had not heart to frown upon his songs,
Though they sang other love and other deeds
Than Roland's, being brother to her lord.
Yet sometimes was she grave and sad of eye,
For pity of the spell her glance could work
Upon its watcher. Oh ! he came to serve,
And stayed to love her ; and she knew it now,
Past all concealment. Oftentimes his eyes,
Fastened upon her face, fell suddenly,

For brother-love and shame ; but oftener
Julie could see them, through her tender tears,
Fixed on some messenger from Holy Land
With wild significance, the thin white lips
Working for grief, because she smiled again.

He spake no love—he breathed no passionate
tale,

Till there came one who told how Roland's sword,
From heel to point, dripped with the Paynim blood ;
How Ascalon had seen, and Joppa's list,
And Gaza, and Nicæa's noble fight,
His chivalry ; and how, with palm-branch won,
Bringing his honours and his wounds a-front,
His prow was cleaving Genoa's sapphire sea,
Bound homewards. Then, the last day of the year,
Claude brought his unused charger to the gate,
Sprang to the broad strong back, and reined its rage
Into a marble stillness. Ah ! more still,
Young Claude le Vavasour, thy visage was,

More marble-white. She stood to see him pass,
And their eyes met; and, ah! but hers were wet
To see his suffering; and she called his name,
And came below the gate; but he bowed down,
And thrust the vizor close over his face,
And so rode on.

Before St. Ouen's shrine
That night the lady watched—a sombre night,
With no sweet stars to say God heard or saw
Her prayers and tears: the grey stone statues
gleamed
Through the gloom ghost-like; the still effigies
Of knight and abbess had a show of life,
Lit by the crimsons and the amethysts
That fell along them from the oriels;
And if she broke the silence with a step,
It seemed the echo lent them speech again
To speak in ghostly whispers; and o'er all,
With a weird paleness midnight might not hide,
Straight from the wall St. Ouen looked upon her,

With his grim granite frown, bidding her hope
No lover's kiss that night—no loving kiss—
None—though there came the whisper of her name,
And a chill sleety blast of midnight wind
Moaning about the tombs, and striking her
For fear down to her knees.

That opened porch

Brought more than wind and whisper ; there were
steps,

And the dim wave of a white gaberdine—
Horribly dim ; and then the voice again,
As though the dead called Julie. Was it dead,
The form which, at the holy altar foot,
Stood spectral in the spectral window-lights ?
Ah, Holy Mother ! dead — and in its hand
The pennon of Sir Roland, and the palm,
Both laid so stilly on the altar front ;
A presence like a knight, clad in close mail
From spur to crest, yet from his armed heel
No footfall ; a white face, pale as the stones,

Turned upon Julie, long enough to know
How truly tryst was kept; and all was gone,
Leaving the lady on the flags, ice-cold.

PART II.

Oh, gentle River! thou that knowest all,
Tell them how loyally she mourned her love;
How her grief withered all the rose-bloom off,
And wrote its record on her patient cheek;
And say, sweet River! lest they do her wrong,
All the sad story of those twenty moons,
The true-love dead—the true-love that lived on
Her faithful memories, and Claude's generous praise,
Claude's silent service, and her tearful thanks;
And ask them, River, for Saint Charity,
To think no wrong, that at the end she gave,
Her heart being given and gone, her hand to him,
Slight thanks for strong deservings.—

Banish care,

Soothe it with flutings, startle it with drums,

Trick it with gold and velvets, till it glow
Into a seeming pleasure. Ah, vain! vain!
When the bride weeps, what wedding-gear is gay?
And since the dawn she weeps—at orisons
She wept—and while her women clasped the zone,
Among its brilliants fell her brighter tears.
Now at the altar all her answers sigh;
Wilt thou?—Ah! fearful altar-memories—
Ah! spirit-lover—if he saw me now!
Wilt thou?—Oh me! if that he saw me now;
He doth, he doth, beneath St. Ouen there,
As white and still—yon monk whose cowl is back!
Wilt thou?—Ah, dear love, listen and look up.
He doth—ah God! with hollow eyes a-fire.
Wilt thou?—pale quivering lips, pale bloodless
lips—
I will not—never—never—Roland—never!

So went the bride a-swoon to Vernier,
So doffed each guest his silken braveries,

So followed Claude, heart-stricken and amazed,
And left the Chapel. But the monk left last,
And down the hill-side, swift and straight and lone
Sandals and brown serge brushed the yellow broom,
Till to the lake he came and loosed the skiff,
And paddled to the lonely island-cell
Midway over the waters. Long ago
He came at night to dwell there—'twas the night
Of Lady Julie's vigil; ever since
The simple fishers left their silver tithe
Of lake-fish for him on the wave-worn flags,
Wherefrom he wandered not, save when that day
He went unasked, and marred a bridal show,—
Wherefore none knew, nor how,—save two alone,
A lady swooning—and a monk at prayers.

And now not Castle-gates, nor cell nor swoon,
Nor splashing waters, nor the flooded marsh,
Can keep these two apart—the Chapel-bells
Ring Angelus and Even-song, and then

Sleep-like her waiting maidens—only one,
Her foster-sister, lying at the gate
Dreaming of roving spirits—starts at one,
And marvels at the night-gear, poorly hid,
And overdone with pity at her plaint,
Letteth her Lady forth, and watches her
Gleaming from crag to crag—and lost at last,
A white speck on the night.

More watchful eyes

Follow her flying—down the water-path,
Mad at the broken bridals, sore amazed
With fear and pain, Claude tracks the wanderer—
Waits while the wild white fingers loose the cord ;
But when she drove the shallop through the lake
Straight for the island-cell, he brooked no stay,
But doffed his steel-coat on the reedy rim,
And gave himself to the quick-plashing pool,
And swimming in the foam her fleetness made,
Strove after—sometimes losing his white guide,
Down-sinking in the wild wash of the waves.

Together to the dreary cell they come,
The shallop and the swimmer — she alone
Thrusts at the wicket,—enters wet and wild.
What sees he there under the crucifix?
What holds his eyesight to the ivied loop?
Oh, Claude!—oh loving heart! be still, and break!
The Monk and Julie kneeling, not at prayer.
She kisses him with warm, wild, eager lips—
Weeps on his heart—that woman, nearly wived,
And “Sweetest love,” she saith, “I thought thee
dead.”

And he—what is he that he takes and clasps
In his her shaking hands, and bends adown,
Crying, “Ah, my sweet love! it was no ghost
That left the palm-branch; but I saw thee not,
And heard their talk of Claude, and held thee false,
These many erring days.” Oh, gaze no more,
Claude, Claude, for thy soul’s peace! She binds
the brand
About his gaberdine, with wild caress;

She fondles the thin neck, and clasps thereon
The gorget! then the breast-piece and the helm
Her quick hands fasten. "Come away," she cries,
"Thou Knight, and take me from them all for thine.
Come, true-love, come." The pebbles, water-washed,
Grate with the gliding of the shallop's keel,
Scarce bearing up those twain.

Frail boat, be strong!

Three lives are thine to keep—ah, Lady pale,
Choose of two lovers—for the other comes
With a wild bound that shakes the rotten plank.
Moon! shine out fair for an avenging blow!
She glitters on a quiet face and form
That shuns it not, but stays the lifted death.
"My brother Roland!—Claude, dear brother mine.—
I thought thee dead.—I would that I had died
Ere this had come.—Nay, God! but she is thine!—
He wills her not for either: look, we fill,
The current drifts us, and the oars are gone,
I will leap forth.—Now by the breast we sucked,

So shalt thou not : let the black waters break
Over a broken heart. — Nay, tell him no ;
Bid him to save thee, Julie — I will leap !”
So strove they sinking, sinking — Julie bending
Between them ; and those brothers over her
With knees and arms close locked for leave to die
Each for the other ; — and the Moon shone down,
Silvering their far-off home, and the great wave
That struck, and rose, and floated over them,
Hushing their death-cries, hiding their kind strife,
Ending the earnest love of three great hearts
With silence, and the splash of even waves.

So they who died for love, live in love now,
And God in heaven doth keep the gentle souls
Whom Earth hath lost, and one poor Poet mourns.

Blackwood's Magazine, 1855.

“ON THE ———TH INSTANT, DROWNED
WHILST BATHING.”

Ho! ho! do ye tempt me so,
Pale dwellers upon the land;
Seem I to come for love to your home,
Skirting the yellow sand?
When I doff my might and slumber in light
Under the summer skies,
Do ye dream I unfold my purple and gold
To pleasure your dainty eyes?
I mind the day when my dancing spray
Clean over your hills was thrown;
And my waves evermore lash madly the shore
While the great Sea seeketh its own.
Blithely ye play on the edge of my spray,
And dabble your feet in my fords,
But little ye think how the ocean's brink
Is athirst for its mortal lords.

Ho! ho! how well he could row!

The youth ye sent me to-day;

How bravely his oar drove the shallop from shore

As he came to me out of the bay.—

I watched him come from his cottage-home

Under the high green hill,

I foamed and dashed as the quick stroke splashed,

And he worked his eager will.

But ho! ho! ——— I looked for it so!

He leapt to my green great arm,

And felt how cold was my deep sea fold,

And chilled with a strange alarm,

Did he deem me mild when the blue sky smiled,

Fierce only in stormy strife?

A boat ye sent — and a life ye lent —

Ho! I kept the warm young life!

Ho! ho! fond fools would ye know

How I staid the panting breath,

And weighed on the breast of the one ye loved best

And dragged him down to his death: —

Down in the green where no sun could be seen
To a death in the sea-weed and shells:—
Down out of sight of the sweet sunlight,
Out of sound of the clear town bells?
Ho! he struggled sore for the fading shore,
And fought with his failing strength,
But I swore he should die, and I smothered his cry,
And the life was mine at length.
Ho! take the bark back without rent or wrack,
Pale mourners along the strand!
A boatman and boat to the sea came out,
But only a boat to land!

Bentley's Miscellany, 1855.

DREAM-LAND.

WONDERFUL Life!

So sad with partings, and so sweet with meetings,
 Made up of wild farewells, and wilder greetings;
 Oh word, with wonder rife!

What do we here?

Whence come we with this longing, loving breast?
 Why do we live to die? we fear our rest;
 And are afraid to fear!

Ah! tell us why,

Why are our pleasures dead within the day,
 While pains make nest-homes of our hearts and stay,
 Wherefore comes misery?

And wherefore Pain ?

And why on our sad Planet, else so fair,
Dwell Hate, and Cowardice, and pale Despair,
And the hot rage for gain ?

Moon and sweet Stars !

Hath God cursed us of all his orbs in Heaven ?
Drive we alone, rayless and unforgiven,
Bloody with brother-wars ?

Speak if ye know !

Why lose we what we love longest and best ?
Shine, Sisters ! shine upon our dark unrest,
Saying, it is not so !

I miss a face,

A friend, whose love was to my life its heart ;
Why are our eyes and hands riven apart ?
Why — even for a space ?

Sorrow and Pain !

Hope's silvery whisper saddens when ye speak,
Go to ! the settled colour of my cheek
Stirs not for her again :

A cheat Life seems !

We'll laugh it off, Brothers : though we have wept!
Therewith, aweary of my thoughts I slept,
And took them to my dreams : —

Ah mystery !

Nay then ! believe it for the sweet dream's sake,
Whether I dreamed asleep, or mused awake,
An Angel spake with me !

Spake from above, —

I knew her though she floated from the skies,
The noble presence, and the large deep eyes
Of her I loved, and love,

Spake low and clear ;

‘ Arise ! I have an errand unto thee !

‘ The heart that dares to beat as thine does, free,

‘ Heareth, what thou shalt hear.’

Thereat I rose,

Wondering to see her balanced pennons spread ;

And keeping their white shadow overhead,

Followed her flying close,

Far, far away ;

Till sound of mortal grief, and mortal mirth,

Died from the sky, and far below the Earth

A quiet, bright globe lay :

And I was ’ware

Of solemn breath breathed in that stilly spot ;

And that the heart spake, though the lips moved not ;

As though its home were there ;

As though its home
Were high among the Angels of God's sky,
Where the wild clouds were wandering ;—and I
Waited for what should come ;

Nor waited long :
For still wherever She and I went winging,
Two voices ever in one key were singing
The measure of one song :

One chorussed word ;
Whereto the soft fan of the silver feather,
Made music as her white wings beat together,
And the blue ether stirred :

Then I—‘ Oh ! whither ? ’
And She—‘ Far past the farthest ken of mortal,
‘ To where the Star-Queen guards the Star-World's
portal,
‘ Thither, Love mine !—aye ! thither ! ’

So when her plumes,
Heretofore high above me gleaming white,
Wore the rich tinting of that Planet's light
In crimson-coloured blooms,

Then from above
Came down the breath of an entrancing pleasure ;
Came round the burden of a boundless measure,
A seraph-song of Love,

High love—whose strain
Her heart and mine, in solemn symphony,
Beating beyond our wills harmoniously,
Answered, answered again.

How did I bear
The gracious glory of my Lady's eyes ?
Save that the bright love in them calmed surprise
And dazzled off my fear ;

Nor only eyes ;
Her sweet lips touched me once upon the brow,
And whispered, ' Love of mine, thou knowest now
 ' The secret of the skies !—

 ' This land of Wings
' Hath rest for thee and me for aye and aye.'
Then I—' Sweet Saint, for my full comfort say
 ' All that its music sings,

 ' All—all it sings :—
' Know'st thou on Earth the earnest love I have,
' Know'st thou that I could love thee in thy grave,
 ' Better than living things ?'

 ' Not there'—she said,
' Into this Dream-Land I have leave to come,
' To cheer thee with the sight of our sweet Home
 ' When Thou and I are dead ;

‘ But there the veil
‘ Is over hearts :— I know not if I know
‘ That thou and I shall e’er be telling so
‘ On Earth, our true-love tale.’

‘ Sweet ! I shall seem
‘ Graceless,’ I said ! ‘ but must there never be
‘ Home-fires—home-faces—and home-loves ?—ah
me !
‘ Nought of my earthly dream ?’

The star-light shone
The brighter for a smile that filled her face :—
No answer ! but a quick and kind embrace :
Save her kiss,— answer none !

Then I, ‘ Ah me !
‘ The brow should wear a crown that wears thy kiss ;
‘ Though I love patiently, I shall lack this,
‘ Not being worthy thee.’

She raised her hand,
And my glance followed it—and I was 'ware
Of a fine spirit floating down the air,
Whose forehead's thought was grand ;

Fast, fast and free
He smote the lyre-strings into magic measures,
Whereto a Lady listed, tranced in pleasures,
Lo ! it was I and she !

And all the throng
Of all sweet things I thought of day by day,
The words I would have said and could not say,
Came up into his song !

' Shall I be thus,
' And thou with me?'—She said ' Be true and brave,
' Follow thy Life out, e'en to thy Life's grave,
' And such shall be thy bliss.'

‘Dear Saint’—I said,

‘Lest I shall faint living a life so lone,

‘Tell me that absence cannot change the gone,

‘Nor death estrange the dead,

‘They, first and last,

‘The comfort of whose spirits was to mine

‘Like Rain to Summer; ah! my heart will pine,

‘Its friendships seeming past.

‘Say!—is it thus?

‘Are our hearts lower, weaker than our thinking,

‘Can leagues divide the subtle spirit-linking,

‘Whose fine chain fettered us?

‘Can they? oh Life!

‘Why at the first or last of thy long day

‘Loose we the hand we clung to by the way,

‘And strive alone in the strife?’

Thereat I wept :—

And she—she touched me with a touch as mild
As a fond mother might her frightened child
Who sighed, and sighing slept.

Saying, ‘Rash one!

‘Love’s strength is perfect in love’s utter weakness,
‘Love’s nobleness is noblest in love’s meekness,
‘Love ever! none are gone!

‘None go! none ever!

‘Know! when two hearts are set to one true time,
‘For aye they make one music, chime one chime,
‘Look up! and doubt it never!’

Our starry torch

Died in a bright white flood of brilliant flame,
Wherein a thousand Angels went and came
Thronging an entrance-Porch

With star-lights groined ;
Whence rang a voice that said, 'Soul ! cease thy
wonder !

'Not Death is strong enough to part asunder,
'Whom Life and Love have joined !'

For which word's sake,
Seeing no stars, no Angels but mine own,
I turned to kiss her hands : lo ! She was flown !
And I—I was awake !

Fraser's Magazine, Sept. 1855.

À MA FUTURE.

WHERE waitest thou,
Lady I am to love? thou comest not ;
Thou knowest of my sad and lonely lot ;
I looked for thee ere now !

It is the May,
And each sweet sister soul hath found its brother,
Only we two seek fondly each the other,
And seeking, still delay.

Where art thou, sweet ?
I long for thee, as thirsty lips for streams !
Oh, gentle promised Angel of my dreams,
Why do we never meet ?

Thou art as I,—
 Thy soul doth wait for mine, as mine for thee ;
 We cannot live apart, must meeting be
 Never before we die ?

Dear soul, not so !
 That time doth keep for us some happy years,
 That God hath portioned us our smiles and tears,
 Thou knowest, and I know.

Yes, we shall meet !
 And therefore let our searching be the stronger,
 Dark ways of life shall not divide us longer,
 Nor doubt, nor danger, sweet !

Therefore I bear
 This winter-tide as bravely as I may,
 Patiently waiting for the bright spring-day
 That cometh with thee, dear.

'Tis the May-light
That crimson all the quiet college gloom ;
May it shine softly in thy sleeping-room :
And so, dear wife, good night !

THE CASKET.

THIS casket with the purple lining,
 Though its form be fair,
 Hath for all its show and shining
 Not a jewel, dear,—
 No gems for thy noble beauty,
 As if gems were not ;
 Such a gift were simple duty,
 Wherefore then forgot ?

Ah, dear love, this silver casket
 Comes not void to thee ;
 Jewels here, if any ask it,
 Lurk invisibly :
 Seen not in a common seeming,
 By the light of day,
 But with glorious splendour gleaming
 In Love's rarer ray.

Strong affection, stronger ever,
Honour true and tried,
Trust and courage failing never,
Patience and high pride ;
Faith that will not fade or waver,
Love that hath no end,
Jewels fair for thee to wear, love,
And for me to send.

JANUARY.

WHICH of the merry months shall I praise ?

Meadow birds, say !

Shall the April nights, or the Autumn days,

Have place in my lay ?

“ Oh the sun of the summer is golden and strong,

“ And the flowers of the summer shine fairly and long,

“ Sing thou to the summer the first of thy song,

“ As we sing on the spray.”

No ! no !

Meadow birds, no !

Mine is the month that is born in the snow.

Which of the months shall my chaplet crown ?

Red rose, speak !

Shall it glitter on August's brow of brown,

Or shade May's cheek ?

“ Though thy chaplet be silver and almondine,
“ The finer and fairer it shine, I ween,
“ ’Tis the fitter for May, for the sweet spring queen,

“ No farther seek !”

Rose, no !

My month, I trow,

Wears the red berries, and stars of snow.

Ah ! wouldst thou know, rosy blossom of spring,

Why I crown not May ?

Askest thou, bird, why I will not sing

To thy summer day ?

May hath the bud, and the bee, and the dove,

And the sky of the summer is bluest above,

But the year’s first month, she bringeth my love,

And her bridal-day !

Say, is it wrong

To keep crown and song

For the month that leadeth my lady along ?

December, 1854.

LLANGOLLEN.

GREEN fields and grey, corn-lands and mountain-
lands,

Beautiful Valley, thou art fair as ever ;

On the same hill the same old abbey stands,

And singing the same song goes down Dee river.

I swear I love thee with mine old hot love,

My vision is not dimmed, nor my heart cold,

Wherefore then, sunny Slopes, can ye not move

My soul to gladness as ye did of old ?

I know it, love,—these winds that fly for home

Take my heart with them to thy tender arms,

And, nestled there, it leaves me here to roam,

Half of myself, amid these wild Welsh farms.

October, 1855.

THE TWO WREATHS.

WHEN the silver stars were throwing
Soft lines on the silver sea,
Like a shade in the twilight showing,
Came my life unto me.

Two garlands daintily bearing,
Unto me came my life,
When the daylight was disappearing,
Save that in thine eyes, dear wife.

Glittered her cymar and kirtle,
Her garlands glimmered and shone ;
One twined with the laurel and myrtle,
And one with the rose alone.

Which crown, she said, shall I leave thee,
The green or the crimson wreath ?
Of the chaplets thy fortune weaves thee,
Choose one to deck thee till death.

Love comes if the rose-crown rings thee,—
Love endless and ever the same ;
And the bright leaf of laurel brings thee
The minstrel's favour and fame.

But the rose hath an angry briar,
That woundeth wherever 'tis worn,
And, with laurel to lift thee higher,
There are poisonous berries of scorn.

In the silence solemnly speaking,
In the darkness easy to see,
Answer to asking seeking,
Waited my life by me.

Then, with ready fingers upstarted
Beside her, mine own wise wife,
The leaves from the berries parted,
And the thorn from the rose of life.

And twined them, with gentle laughter,
In a new and unharmed wreath :
And the roses and laurels hereafter
Shall crown me for life and death.

ALMOND BLOSSOM.

BLOSSOM of the almond-trees,
April's gift to April's bees,
Birthday ornament of spring,
Flora's fairest daughterling ;—
Coming when no flow'rets dare
Trust the cruel outer air ;
When the royal king-cup bold
Dares not don his coat of gold ;
And the sturdy blackthorn spray
Keeps his silver for the May ;—
Coming when no flow'rets would,
Save thy lowly sisterhood
Early violets, blue and white,
Dying for their love of light.
Almond blossom, sent to teach us
That the spring-days soon will reach us,

Lest, with longing over tried,
We die as the violets died.
Blossom, clouding all the tree
With thy crimson broidery,
Long before a leaf of green
On the bravest bough is seen ;
Ah ! when winter winds are swinging
All thy red bells into ringing,
With a bee in every bell,
Almond bloom, we greet thee well.

SONNET.

LIKE one, who in the stormy crash of battle,
 With sword and shield too heavy for his hold,
 Bleeding, and weak, and deafened with the rattle,
 Feels his limbs sinking and his heart a-cold,
 Sudden a gentle eye, gentle and bold,—
 A friendly look falls on him through the fight,
 And once again his tired fingers fold
 About the hilt, and strike a stroke aright.—
 So has thy gracious look, lady, to-night
 Nerved me with courage more than may be told ;
 So stand and strike I, fighting in thy sight,
 Backward or forward be life's battle rolled ;
 And so I grasp my purpose, and I swear
 To win the wreath that I am set to wear.

ALL SAINTS' DAY.

UP from earth to heaven's wide regions
 Send your prayer and praise to-day,
 For the glorious martyr-legions
 Hence triumphant passed away.

Sigh of doubt or shade of sorrow
 Ill beseemeth heart or brow,
 Theirs like ours seemed sad to-morrow,
 Who smile at our sadness now.

Let it go, a song of gladness,
 Unto brother-angels there :—
 We alive in sin and sadness,
 They "dead in His faith and fear."

Dead, but on dead foreheads wearing
Crowns that make their death a birth,
Won by hope that scorned despairing,
Worn in heaven for wars on earth.

Nay! and name not crowned ones, only
Nobly known for death and life,—
Hero souls, unmoved and lonely,
Fighting in the front of strife.

But those, too, who freely, gladly,
Uncomplaining fought to die ;
Striving, striking all too madly
To find time for battle-cry.

Those, the silent ones, who near them
Planted foot, and fought, and fell,
With no clarion praise to cheer them,
No voice crying ill or well.

These we owned not for God's angels,
Shall not own before we die,
Though their lives were men's evangels,
And their deaths our victory.

Those whose lives, unknown to others,
Silent went to silent ends ;
Some to some of us own brothers,
All to all of us high friends.

All saints now, all now abiding
In glad homes beyond the sky,
Wearing, where salt tears were tiding
Smiles of set felicity.

Smiles that call us to sky portals,
Saying, " On ! brave heart and brow ;"
Fail not, faint not, we were mortals
That are perfect spirits now.

Thank God for them meekly bending,

That such soldiers lived and died,

Ask that thine be such an ending,

Such a death on such a side.

ANDRÈ CHENIER.

Andrè Chenier, a young French poet of great promise, died by the guillotine July 27th, 1794. On his way to the scaffold he struck his forehead and said, "To die so very soon, and all this here too!"

AXE and headsman, all things ready,
 While, with quiet step and steady,
 Wearing front which no fear showeth,
 Onward to his death he goeth ;
 Once there faltered from his tongue
 One word,—“ Ah, to die so young !”
 Once he smote his forehead fair,
 Sighing, “ Ah, what things were here !”

But about him bright ones winging,
 Sang more sweetly than his singing,—

“ Whom the gods love well die early,
Thou hast earned thy quittance dearly ;
All too fine and free for mortals,
Lift thy lay to heaven’s portals.
Die ! those golden dreams were given
All to bring thee back to heaven ;
Home ! where angels wait to hear thee !
Home ! where one swift stroke shall bear thee !

SERENADE.

LUTE ! breathe thy lowest in my Lady's ear,
Sing while she sleeps, " Ah ! belle dame, aimez-
vous ?"

Till dreaming still, she dream that I am here,
And wake to find it, as my love is, true ;
Then, when she listens in her warm white nest,
Say in slow measure,—softer, stiller, yet,
That lute-strings quiver when their tone's at rest,
And my heart trembles when my lips are set.

Stars ! if my sweet love still a dreaming lies,
Shine through the roses for a lover's sake,
And send your silver to her lidded eyes ;
Kissing them very gently till she wake,
Then while she wonders at the lay and light,
Tell her, though morning endeth star and song,
That ye live still, when no star glitters bright,
And my love lasteth, though it finds no tongue.

THE POOR SCHOLAR TO HIS
POUND STERLING.

GOLD! as I'm a starving sinner!

Saint Cecilia! what a chink!—

I'll ordain a regal dinner,—

Gods! I'll eat and drink.

Counter in the game of living,

Buying deuce, knave, queen, and king,

Bartered, borrowed, given, giving,

Potent yellow thing!

Now I feel, I see thy story,

Grecian, gold-won Danae;—

If one comes with grace and glory,

What must a shower be?

Oh, Fortuna ! and this morning
Thou mightest have spared me my Catullus,
And stilled my landlady's shrill warning,
Instead of sweet Tibullus.

Too late ! I dined on old Homerus,
And Plautus paid my washing bill ;
Well ! " carus," stranger, " tamen serus,"
Thou'rt most welcome still.

Nay, but stay ! it can't be really
All a solemn sterling pound,
I've seen so few—I'll ring it fairly :
Mammon ! there's a sound !

Yea ! by all the sands of Hermus,
By Apollo's golden bow,
See, my soul ! these signs confirm us,
'Tis—where shall we go ?

Venison's in, and at the Sceptre
 Splendidly I know they dress it,
 Had I two!—ah! sage preceptor,
 “*Amor nummi crescit.*”

For the potent charm that binds thee,
 Shillings twenty! to my heart,
 Is—whichever after finds thee,
 Thou and I must part.

Lo! mine inn!—Hence, cares! in “mare
 Creticum,”—or down to Greenwich.

* * * * *

Is this after all but fairy
 Land,—or lamb and spinach?

Waiter, ho! “*vinum deprome,—*”
 Bring an amphora, I say—
 Dost thou better seek to know me?
 Doubtest thou I'll pay?

Lo! the coin! quick, varlet, quicker!

Napkined knave! mistrustful churl!—

Cleopatra-like, in liquor

Thus I melt my pearl.

WAIT YET.

AMONG the flowers stood at spring,

A lowly plant and bare ;

The snowdrop by so base a thing

Was proud—the briar fair :

But the golden days adorned it .

With blossoms of the best ;

And though fickle April scorned it,

May bore it in her breast.

Ah, soul ! with hope and watching worn,

Mourn not thy leafless spring !

The joyless days of life were born

The joyful ones to bring ;

Patience makes mirth as buds make bloom,

Past loss is present treasure,

To-day's remembered grief and gloom

Will be to-morrow's pleasure

THE EMIGRANT.

It may be that the savage sea is foaming
And wild winds roaming where thy ship goes free ;
Yet still as dearly, brother, and sincerely,
As if more nearly, we will cling to thee.

The white sails wing thee fast through Biscay billows,
Past English willows we are whirling on ;
Though wider never did drear waste dissever,
Better than ever we will love thee gone.

We shall not know by what sweet isles of blossom,
Thy bark's broad bosom ploughs the rippled blue ;
What storms are chiding, what soft winds are
gliding,
No longed-for tiding — yet our hearts are true.

For seeking still to know where thou art, Rover,
We but discover that our love is there ;
Far, far behind thee we are strong to find thee,
Oh then remind thee of the love left here.

August, 1854.

THE THREE STUDENTS.

FROM THE GERMAN.

THERE came three students from over the Rhine,
To a certain good hostel they turned them for wine.

Ho ! Landlady, have you strong wine and beer ?
How fareth the Fraulein, your daughter dear ?

My beer is fresh, and my wine is bright ;
My child will be shrouded and buried to-night.

They drew the door of her death-room back,
There slumbered she in her coffin black :—

The first he lifted the veil from the dead,
And bared his curls, and bended, and said,

“ Ah ! could'st thou but live again, maiden, here
From this day forth I would love thee dear ! ”

The second spread softly the face-cloth again,
And his tears fell fast as the midsummer rain :

“ Dead ! art thou, Lisbeth ? cold, lip and brow ?
Ah God ! I learn how I loved thee now ! ”

But the third in his hand did the little hand take,
And kissed the white forehead, and smiled and spake,

“ I love thee to-day as I loved thee before,
I shall love thee as truly for evermore.”

NEW YEAR'S EVE,

1852-53.

COME ! for all the gifts he brought ye ; come, for all
the good he taught ye ;

For the many a brightened blessing, for the many
a lightened woe ;

Leave your ingles warm and cheery, gaze into the
midnight dreary,

Where the old year lies a-dying,—dying in the
frost and snow ;

Gaze, and while his heavy breathing rises like the
mists a-wreathing ;

While the far stars shake and shudder at the
passing of his soul ;

When the death draws ever nearer, and the drear
night waxes drearer,

Chaunt your “miserere mei” solemnly, and toll
the toll,

Toll a funeral toll on the bell,
Strike the strings to a farewell song ;
Dying is he we have known so well,
Dead the friend we have loved so long.

Dead, but when the song is ending let a sudden
eager blending

Sweep away the sound of mourning from the
silver bells and strings ;

Over town and hamlet ringing, let the merry song
go singing

Welcome to the Young Year's beauty, and the
blessed gifts she brings ;

Greet her for the apple-blossoms wreathed about
her budding bosoms,

Love her for the sunny days her barley-braided
hair foretells,

Bless her for the pleasant plenty,—grape and grain
that God hath sent ye ;

Laud her ! though we live to lose her in the snow,
and chime the bells.

Chime the bells to a marriage chime,
Strike the strings to a birthday song,
For the fairest daughter of father Time,
For the lady who cometh to live with us long.

ENOUGH.

His mother was a prince's child,

His sire a crownèd king ;

There lacked not to his wishes wild

What the broad earth could bring :

Strong knees were supple at his word,

Swords glimmered at his will.

Brave fortune ! but it wearied him,—

His spirit thirsted still.

For him the glorious music rolled

Of singers silent long ;

The Roman and the Grecian told

Their wars of Right and Wrong ;

For him Philosophy unveiled

Athenian Plato's lore ;

Might these not serve to stead a life ?

Not these !—he sighed for more.

He loved,— the truest, newest lip
That ever lover pressed,—
The queenliest mouth of all the South
Long love for him confessed.
Round him his children's joyousness
Rang silverly and shrill ;
Thrice happy ! save that happiness
Lacked something,— something still.

It came ! the studded sceptre lay
An unregarded thing ;
Velvets and gold did bravely hold
The body of the king.
Why ! strange that Love, and Lore, and Sway
Looked ever on before,
And those pale, quiet lips of clay
Asked nothing — nothing more !

ARISTIPPUS.

LET be,—let be !

These idle follies are not for the wise,
 A scholar's loves are fair philosophies ;
 I prithee leave me free !

Nay, Lady, nay !

I read Greek legends sweeter than thy song,—
 Uncourteous ! thou tarriest overlong ;
 I marvel at thy stay.

What ! the tears glisten ?

Indeed I would not wound thy little heart ;
 We'll be good friends, and kiss ; but we must part,
 In sooth, — I may not listen.

Once then, and twice,—

Ai, Cytherea ! are lips like to these ?

Get thee away ! thy mouth hath witcheries

Strange for what is not wise.

Well,—yet again ;

By Pan ! it hath a soft and coral curl,

I sorrow that I angered at thee, girl !

Dis pardon me thy pain !

But thou 'lt go now,—

Take hence the tresses of thy hyacinth hair.—

Nay, nay ! unbind them not,—'tis over fair,—

Keep the band on thy brow ;

I like it well !

Its jewels, making quaint and equal strife

With red and blue, mock lips and eyes to life ;

There let them ever dwell.

Shamed of their glow,—
Now, by Athene! but I trifle long,
If thou must stay, sweet lady, sing a song,—
Doric, and grave, and slow.

One melody,—
Soft music to sage musing lends relief.—
Nay, draw not near, *thou* wilt not turn the leaf
Of old philosophy!

Well, an' thou'lt learn,
See how it saith, "That in the ancient date
Priam of Troy——" Ah! but thou must not wait
To kiss before we turn.

Thy broad braids fell,
Sweeping the pages, Lady; let me lay
On this white neck the glossy veil away,
Now we shall study well.

Oh me ! thou'rt ill,—
The vermeil of thy cheek is fever-warm,
Dear one, thy heart beats ever on my arm,
And mine is never still.

What aileth me ?
They fade,—the dim dull characters of Greek,
My lips lack all but kisses, if I speak
'T will be to worship thee !

Unlock thine arms,—
Thy touch,—ai, ai ! thy sweet breath is a spell,
Hide, Circe ! hide thy deep breasts' ivory swell !
Oh, white witch, spare thy charms !

Nay, spare not now !
Hence, grey-beard sage ! I love thee, Life of mine ;
Kiss freer, faster,—I am all, all thine,
Kiss me on lip and brow.

EFFIE.

WEARY, weary, the lang hours wear,
 They stap to keek at me, and winna gae ;
 I count ilk ane o' their ticks wi' a tear,
 Twalve o' the night, an' twalve o' the day.

Aince I kenned na which was the fairest,
 The shimmer o' moonlight or morning's ray ;
 Noo I wist na which hours be the sairest,
 Twalve o' the night, or twalve o' the day.

He's aff, wha's ever was months twa three,
 Wi' his false fair mou', an' his steed o' the grey,
 He's left me to wale what time I'll dee,
 Twalve o' the night, or twalve o' the day.

Bonnie he was whan he fleeched my heart,—

I hadna the heart to gie' him the nay ;

There wasna an hour then that saw us apart,

Twalve o' the night, or twalve o' the day.

I'd love him again an' it were to do,

Aiblins I greet that I lo'ed him sae ;

There wasna time to love him enoo,

Twalve o' the night, an' twalve o' the day.

They tauld me the bee wi' his braw gold coat

Flits fair to the flower, but he winna stay :

I've muckle room noo to remind me o't,

Twalve o' the night, an' twalve o' the day.

Whisht ! puir bairnie ! thou'lt madden thy mammie

If thou'rt life-weary, why I am sae ;

We'segang to the grey sea, an' sleep there, my lammie,

Twalve o' the night, an' twalve o' the day.

TO F. C. H.

WE stood at the white gate and looked o'er the lea

In September, Fred !

We saw the great river grow broad into sea ;

Dost remember, Fred ?

We watched grey sails while they faded away

In the grey weather, Fred ;

And we asked to see whither went that seaway,

Close together, Fred !

Half was heard as it rose from the spot

With the blue smoke, Fred ;

Half the Collector of Clouds heard not

That we then spoke, Fred ;

By Necessity, fisher of men, caught now

Like a halibut, Fred ;

Christians I teach here, and Mussulmen thou,

Close by Calicut, Fred !

Come back, and take the things that are th.

In the old land, Fred :

A warm corner, welcome, some old Rhine wine,

And a true hand, Fred ;

And, in token that these await thee, Fred,

Ere we ferry the Styx,

I give thee, — 'tis paper currency, — Fred,

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Birmingham, 1855.

HEART OF MINE.

WHEN we both are very weary,
 Heart of mine,
And all before is dreary,
 Heart of mine,
With never a friend to love us,
And life's sky black above us,
Shall we faint because they prove us,
 Heart of mine ?

Nay, rather, bear it longer,
 Than complain,
The bold resolve is stronger
 Than the pain ;
Though thou and I do sever,
We will yield our weapons never,
But try the brave endeavour
 Yet again.

For the worst that comes to-morrow
Will but mend ;
We can bear the deepest sorrow
It can send :
The sun we thought declining,
Behind the cloud is shining,
We can wait without repining
For the end.

THE LOST PLEIAD; A STORY
OF THE STARS.

At the noon of a May night,
When the stars are all alight,
And the white moon wanders through the grey;
And slowly over all
God's gentle hand doth fall,
To shield tired eyes from the day;—

At such a night's noon,
I watched the stars and moon,
Till they and I alone did seem to be;
Till in that silver throng,
Sorely my soul did long
To rove at will, and many wonders see.

Wherefore I let it large,
And up from Earth's dim marge
It bounded like a horse from broken rein ;
From the Dragon's flaming crest
To Orion's star-bound breast,
It roamed upon that Planet-studded plain.

On the broad flank of the Bear,
Dubhè flashed fierce and clear,
Lighting his glancing eyes and gleaming tusk ;
And the Lion shook his mane,
And the great star-feathered Crane
Was up among his brothers of the dusk.

In the Northern Bull's bright van
I saw dread Aldebaran,
Andromeda's wild hair I saw a-flame,
By the Lyre's glittering strings,
Down through the Swan's white wings,
Unto a lovely, lonely light I came.

A cloud of splendour sent
Out on the firmament,
As 't were the breath of each light-laden star,
A stream of splendour seen,
Broad in that sea of sheen,
Like Indian rivers flowing seaward far.

None other orbs did move
In For such sweet show of love,
None shone like these in the sky companies ;
I knew the Sisters Seven
Were the light-bearers of Heaven,
Whom men do name the tearful Pleiades.

On each broad Planet's rim
Each held an urn at brim,
And poured its molten silver down her world ;
In which fair gift of light
It's live things took delight,
And she in them :—one orb alone was furled

In gloom ; nor ray did send,
Save when the Six did bend
Their sister glances on the lonely one ;
Whereat I could descry
A sad, mild majesty,
Sitting unlighted on a lightless sun.

Why she alone of Seven,
Nor gave nor took in Heaven
Heaven's gift and gladness—Heaven-filling light—
Wherefore God's awful wrath
Sent her that lampless path,
And dimmed her crown among the Queens of Night.

I longed and sought to hear,—
Oh ! gather round and near,—
I know that starless angel's story through ;
It was not all a dream,
It did not wholly seem,—
Listen ! I strike low strings ! and tell it true.

* * * * *

Oh ! Sisters Six, lead my dark star and me,
For I am Merope — blind Merope,
And I go shorn of light who lighted all.
Oh, splendid Sister Stars ! gleam on my path,
And show me where it winds among the worlds,
Nor turn your glances hence, because I sit
And moan upon the story of my sin,
For I am Merope — blind Merope,—
Merope — light-abandoned Merope,
Who stood between God's lowest and God's love.

Oh, thrice twain Sisters ! lead my world along.
In the beginning when none was save He,
God flung from both great hands His star-seed forth
Over the endless meadows of the air ;
Wherein, as in the grain the broad green blade,
Life lay, and life's high loves and happy ends ;
And unto each He gave fit ministrant,
And faithful warder. Some were kings of suns,
And dipped their cressets in the molten gold

That rippled round His throne ; and other some
Fed on their borrowed glory, and were glad,
Frail spirits, shunning the full glance of God ;
Some with the vaporous wreaths they did bestride,
Faded or were illumed ; and some at speed
Rode errant angels, singing thorough space,
Curbing the Comets to their headlong course ;
And unto some He gave a gentler gift,
To tend the lower worlds, and shine for them ;
And unto us, His youngest-born, the Earth,
An ever-needing, never-ceasing care :
And chief He charged our Seven Sister-lights
To wax and wane above her, keeping eye
Mid station : and at noon and night, and ever,
To listen open-eared, and bear above
Unto His feet its children's cries and tears,—
For all tears that do fall, fall for God's ear.
Ai, ai ! it was our charge—a gracious charge,
Ai, ai ! I lost love's task unlovingly,

For I am Merope—blind Merope,—
Merope,—light-abandoned Merope,
Who stood between God's lowest and God's love.

Oh, Sisters Six ! I follow plainly,—
For I am Merope ; and on my brow
God, at the giving of the silver worlds,
Laying His hand, left splendour. None of all,
Sisters—not one of all your gleaming band,
Wore whiter glory, or stood nearer God.
First of the seven lights I came and went,
And unto me Electra bent her beams,
And Maia bowed her brightness—and ye three,
Alcyone, Celæno, Taygete,
And silver Sterope, next me in place,
Took light from me, and tended me with love.
I was a perfect Angel of pure ray,
Chosen a chief of Planets. Woe is me !
I am a wildered thing in well-known paths,

For I am Merope,—lorn Merope,—
She that was great in Heaven become the least,
Standing between God's lowest and God's love.

Oh, Sisters! lead me with the sound of song,
Sweep solemn music forth from balanced wings,
And leave it cloudlike in the fluttered sky,
That I may feel and follow. Ah! my light,
My vanished lovely light! I sate in place
With wakeful eyes and kept the earth in ken;
And ye around me waited for my word.
Far down below the cone of shadow crept
Whereunder was Earth's night, and from its gloom
Prayers, and the sound of tears, and other sounds
Which unto angel ears are strange, came up
Like smoke from peaked volcano, and our vans
Fanned them fresh breath to take them on to God.
Sisters! amid the myriad cries that rose
From lips that Night's nepenthe could not calm,
Came a long prayer for mercy, growing loud

As it waxed hopeless—she who uttered it,
A sad stained woman, with a fair fierce cheek,
Kneeling beside the black rim of a river,
The rim of a black river, surging out
From a great city's glare into the gloom.
I saw her—and ye saw her, Sisters mine,
Plucking the mother's bosom from her babe
Ere the waves took them—one starved dead of love,
And one of life—both crying one heart-cry
That asked God's pity in pain's common tongue ;
And ye said, " Sister, let it go to God ;"
And I, who knowing all things knew her sin,
And what deed stained the raiment of her soul,
Answered, " It goeth not, her grief is just ;"
And struck it down the sky. Woe! woe! her cry
Fell, and then rose, and grew up from a groan
Into a voice,—a voice that struck the Stars
And bounded from their brilliant capes, and rolled
Louder than living thunder, crash on crash,
Thrilling the Planets, till each Angel knew

The very voice of God, saying, "Thou Star !
Thou, Merope ! go earthward." Ah, my light !
Oh, Sisters, lead my world on while I weep,
For I am Merope,— blind Merope,
Merope,—light-abandoned Merope,
Who heard unmoved God's lowest ask His love.

Hear no more, holy Sisters, hear no more !
Bar the white porch of each unshamèd ear
With double-folded wing, for I must speak
Of things that enter not at that high gate,—
The mournful matter of a mortal life,
Whereto I went—hence,—but I know not how !
Fairer are homes of heaven, yet very fair
Thy fields and fountains were, my prison-house,
Caverns and woods, valleys and veiny brooks ;
And thou, too, mountain-cradled Indian stream,
By whose green rim my feet new from the clouds
Touched the hard earth, and stood : in whose great

towns

My spirit breathed harsh air of earth,— and lived :
Within the temple of that country's God
Amid the Indian maids I moved as one,
And took the manner of their mood and tongue,
And wore their vest and veil, and bore the name
An earthly father gave, and called his boy
A gentle human boy, loving and brave,
My brother !— Oh, woe ! woe ! light me along !
For I am Merope,—shamed Merope,
She that was made God's lowest on the earth,
Standing between God's lowest and His love.

Oh ! Stars,— I say not Sisters, saying this :—
War rose in that our home, spears fringed the walls
Where corn bristled before ; an old fierce king
Sought us for slaves, and men laid down their lives
That others might live free : my brother fought
A-front in all the battles, for these hands
Buckled the steel that kept his heart from harm,
And fed his quiver. Sinless human love
Touched me, and on the battlements by night,

Gazing unknowingly upon mine own,
I charged Star-Angels to shine fair for him,
And send him loving light. At such a time,
The captain of the chariots of the king,
Watching our wall, cast eyes of earnest love
On me, and lit my soul up with a flame
Wherein all maiden meekness, fear and faith,
Courage to strive and purity to pray,
And the last little wrack of glory lost,
Melted as May snow melts under the sun,
And left a bare bad heart. Oh ! hear me not,
High Stars ! a cursed thing is loveless love,—
Accursed of God, I knew it, and I fell.
Am I not Merope ? —dark Merope,
That Merope whom God's wrath did cast down,
Standing between God's lowest and God's love.

Sisters ! lead me along. The Planets pale,
The powers of Heaven are pale to hear in Heaven
The story of my shame. Ai, ai ! light on !

I hurry to the ending. Many an eve,—
Oh, silver worlds, ye saw it!—we did meet,
And drank the burning cup of Passion dry,
Nor slacked the draught, nor stayed, though we
might see

The dreggy poison through the purple wine.
Oh, a strong thing is Love!—strong as a fiend
To drag the soul to Hell,—strong as a saint
To lift it to sweet Heaven! I swore to him
To yield the city open-gated up
Unto his thirsty swords, for pity went,
And faith, and fair thoughts,—all but headlong love,
At his strong breath. My brother kept the guard
O' the eastern gate: I took him food, and tried
The buckles of his breastplate,—one I loosed,
And drew his battle-knife, and laughingly
Struck on the tempered scales, whereat he smiled,
And bade me strike amain: good sooth! I did,—
Down through the stolen passage past his heart,
That the life left him ere the bright blood came;

Then I flung back the portals, and let in
A sea of stormy plumes,—it swept along
One little breath-time, soon a rock-like band
Met it—and stayed—and turned, and scattered it,
Ten to a hundred, fighting for the right,
And scored the backs of the fliers, for all fled
Save one ; and him, under my wringing hands,
The savage lances stabbed through greave and groin :
Then mine eyes swam in blood ; some angry gripe
Somewhither haled the reeking corse and me
Past howling citizens. Oh, let me end !
Oh ! light sad Merope, and let her end !
Merope,—hope-abandoned Merope,
Who stood between God's lowest and God's love !

Oh, sapphire-vested Sisters ! oh, crowned Lights !
Bear with my moan a little ; I must tell
How human life did leave me. It was when
The stream whereby we lived did slowly rise
To flood his rushy banks. I, gaining sight,

Waking in fetters by the dark stream-side,
Saw under me the swelling tide, and knew
Cold Death was creeping upward. Oh! I shrieked,
And strained the links that held me to the slime,
And sank soul-stricken on the bloody breast
Of what I loved,—he lay there, and on mine
My child, poor fool! I tore him off, and then,
Mad, bleeding, passion-poisoned, wild with woe,
Kneeling beside the black rim of the river,—
The rim of the black river, surging out
From the great city's glare into the gloom,
I cried aloud to God. *The cry came back,*
As I had spurned it! Yea, I knew it all!
As I had spurned it, sitting on my Star!
Yea, yea! I knew it all, and one wild space
God's anger scathed me, then the kind quick waves
Lapped o'er my lip and washed the foul life out;
And then I know not what,—and then I sat,
Dark on my darkling star. Oh, holy God!
I do adore Thee, Mighty, Merciful,

Pitying all things, Thou didst pity me,
Who pitied not ; for I am Merope,—
Ai, ai ! Light-bearers, I am Merope,
Merope,— Heaven-exiled Merope,
Who stood between God's lowest and God's love.

SONGS OF THE TIME.



THE "TIGER."

A letter from Odessa of June 16th states :—" A few days ago the English steamer *Vesuvius* ran into these roads and brought the wife of Captain Giffard, to whom General Osten-Sacken gave the permission, with a quarantine guardian, to visit the grave of her husband, who commanded the ill-fated steamer *Tiger*. * * * She remained twenty-four hours collecting particulars of her husband's dying moments, which were those of a hero meeting his death in his country's cause."

BENEATH Odessa's foreland,
 Washed by the Russian wave,
 Shattered and black an English ship
 Rots in her sandy grave.
 The sea-shell clogs her cannon,
 The sea-worm eats her oak,
 And the sea-weeds dank cling to the plank
 Whence English thunders spoke.

Behind Odessa's foreland,
Under the Russian sky,
That noble vessel's noble chief
In bloody grave doth lie.
Not bravely in fair battle
Cut down upon his deck,
But driving lost on an iron coast,
And shot on a helpless wreck.

Unto Odessa's foreland
Who comes for vengeance due?
A legion bold in steel and gold—
A fleet with seamen true?
Oh shame! no sworn avengers,
But a gentle lady there,
Sitting alone by an uncarved stone
Weeping her wifely tear.

Oh, black Odessian foreland,
Only his widow there!

Oh, lonely, lonely sepulchre,
Only one falling tear!
Why roars no rage of cannon?
Why rings no levelled gun?
With sword and spear—not sigh and tear—
England should mourn her son.

She to that fatal foreland
Came o'er the stormy wave;
Shall women for the one they love
Alone be bold and brave?
How, England, will thy captains
Die bravely in thy strife,
When Giffard's rest no mourner blest
But a woman and a wife?

Far from Odessa's foreland
His vessel's jack was ta'en;
Oh! for the death its champion died
Win back that flag again.

Plant it with shot and sabre
Above the Russian's best ;
And the conquering shout, as the cross flaunts out,
Shall bring him better to rest.

"The Press."

THE VIGIL.

The Empress spent an hour and a half yesterday with the corpse.—*Vide Times.*

FOR her dead by the Black Sea water
England hath praises and prayers ;
For her dead by the plague and the slaughter
France payeth pity and tears :
In the South the dead lie a-sleeping,
In the North lies sleeping the dead ;
Who sits in the Northland weeping ?
Who watches beside that bed ?

That silent bed of the silent dead, mourned still and
mourner still,
The purple bent o'er purple shent of worship and of
will ;
The crowned brow bent long and low o'er crownless
brow and white,
Where a Queen doth moan for her King o'erthrown
in pride of place and might.

Low lies he there—a woman's care, a woman's
watch and ward,
The star of strife, the lord of life, the swayer of the
sword ;
A woman's loss to sign with cross, and gaze upon
and moan —
He lies, the scorner of the threat, the shaker of the
throne.

Nay, let her weep ! he sleeps a sleep tears will not
waken now,

Though faster far they fall and star that settled
cheek and brow ;

Nay, let her sigh ! if such must die, strong, terrible,
and grand,

Doth she alone make wail and moan—his wife,
of all his land !

Weep, woman, weep ! if dead men sleep sounder
when tears fall free ;

Weep faster, wife, for that lost life ! none weepeth
it but thee ;

Greet louder, Queen, for what hath been—alone—
alone—alone—

Thy bitter pain is Earth's great gain—Earth's
music is thy moan.

“It cannot be that this is he!”—draw down the
shroud again!

But yesterday his word had sway o'er mountain,
moor, and plain;

And mountain, fountain, moor, and plain—speak
louder! take thy breath!

Tell him his Earth is wild with mirth, and shouteth
for his death.

“He shall not die! look! look! the eye; it flashes
as of yore!”

Thine own tear, Queen, glistens, I ween, where
shone no tear before;

Nay, doubttest thou?—touch breast and brow—
cold! chilly! through and through,

As under turf the Servian serf his hungry sabres
slew.

“Nay! not yet dead! it is not fled the life that
dealt with life!

The fingers white are clenched for fight — he
dreameth of the strife!

Ho, bring the crown! my Lord, thy town is free;
the foe is fled

From steel and shot! What, stirr'st thou not? —
Dead! — queenly mourner, dead!

Dead! dead! they shout. Empress, watch out thy
dreamy vigil there

Beside that prayerless, tearless bed — that unre-
gretted bier,

Louder than sighs our curses rise — curses for
plague and pain,

Wrought by that king — that nameless thing — the
slayer God hath slain.

Mourn thou him dead ! that kingly head, we joy to
see it sunk ;

The bitter will to slay and kill, the soul with
slaughter drunk !

Wail for thy star, thy lord of war—beneath thy
kiss a clod—

Lone Queen and proud—more long and loud *our*
wail doth go to God.

“ The Press.”

IN MEMORIAM.

AH! not because our Soldier died before his field
was won;

Ah! not because life would not last till life's long
task were done,

Wreath one less leaf, grieve with less grief,—of all
our hosts that led

Not last in work and worth approved,—Lord Raglan
lieth dead.

His nobleness he had of none, War's Master taught
him war,

And prouder praise that Master gave than meaner
lips can mar;

Gone to his grave, his duty done; if farther any
seek,

He left his life to answer them,—a soldier's,—let
it speak!

'T was his to sway a blunted sword,—to fight a fated
field,
While idle tongues talked victory, to struggle not to
yield ;
Light task for placeman's ready pen to plan a field
for fight,
Hard work and hot with steel and shot to win that
field aright.

Tears have been shed for the brave dead ; mourn
him who mourned for all !
Praise hath been given for strife well striven, praise
him who strove o'er all,
Nor count that conquest little, though no banner
flaunt it far,
That under him our English hearts beat Pain and
Plague and War.

And if he held those English hearts too good to
pave the path

To idle victories, shall we grudge what noble palm
he hath ?

Like ancient Chief he fought a-front, and mid his
soldiers seen,

His work was aye as stern as theirs ; oh ! make his
grave as green.

They know him well,—the Dead who died that
Russian wrong should cease,

Where Fortune doth not measure men,—their souls
and his have peace ;

Aye ! as well spent in sad sick tent as they in
bloody strife,

For English Homes our English Chief gave what
he had,—his life.

“ The Press.”

FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE.

IF on this verse of mine
 Those eyes shall ever shine,
 Whereto sore-wounded men have looked for life,
 Think not that for a rhyme,
 Nor yet to fit the time,
 I name thy name,—true victress in this strife !
 But let it serve to say
 That, when we kneel to pray,
 Prayers rise for thee thine ear shall never know ;
 And that thy gallant deed,
 For God, and for our need,
 Is in all hearts, as deep as love can go.

'Tis good that thy name springs
 From two of Earth's fair things—

A stately city and a soft-voiced bird ;
 'T is well that in all homes,
 When thy sweet story comes,
And brave eyes fill—that pleasant sounds be heard.
 Oh voice ! in night of fear,
 As night's bird, soft to hear,
Oh great heart ! raised like city on a hill ;
 Oh watcher ! worn and pale,
 Good Florence Nightingale,
Thanks, loving thanks, for thy large work and will !
 England is glad of thee—
 Christ, for thy charity,
Take thee to joy when hand and heart are still !

“ *The Press.* ”

THE ORDER OF VALOUR.

THUS saith the Queen ! “ For him who gave
 His life as nothing in the fight,
 So he from Russian wrong might save
 My crown, my people, and my right ;
 Let there be made a cross of bronze
 And grave thereon my queenly crest,
 Write VALOUR on its haughty scroll,
 And hang it on his breast.”

Thus saith the Land ! “ He who shall bear
 Victoria’s cross upon his breast,
 In token that he did not fear
 To die, had need been, for her rest ;
 For the dear sake of her who gives,
 And the high deeds of him who wears,
 Shall, high or low, all honour have
 From all, through all his years.”

February, 1856.

IO! PÆAN!

Ho, brother-bands, ho, sister-lands, take heart and
fight it out!

The plighted word, the sacred sword shall bear us
through the bout:

On the flags that flaunt together the Star of Victory
smiles,

Hurrah, for the golden Lilies and the Lion of the
Isles!

Ho! tyrant of the icy North, quake in thy leaguered
town,

For shot and shout tell loudly out thy granite hold
is down!

Ho! brothers of the English blood, ho! gallant
friends of France,

Bear on the golden Lilies, and the Lion-flag advance!

But now the echo of the fight came to us from the
North;

At Sweaborg's fort a work was wrought whereto
we sent ye forth;

And high o'er grim Sebastopol, good fleet and
gallant files,

Flutter the golden Lilies, and the Lion of the Isles!

No more that robber's hold frowns down on Servian
and Turk,

Victoria the Good hath razed bad Catharine's
brigand work.

Ill match, God wot, for Russian shot, for Russian
lies and wiles,

Against the golden Lilies and the Lion of the Isles!

Where rides the caitiff armament that swept an
empty sea?

Where are the butchers of Sinoub? even when
their victims be!

Sunk in the wave they swore to rule ;—foul weed
the flag defiles
That braved the golden Lilies, and the Lion of the
Isles !

Say, have the twelve months taught ye, Czars, that
till their work be done,
The sword of England goes not up, France standeth
to her gun ?
Send thy hordes forth, King of the North ! but
learn, proud fool, the whites,
Slaves cannot stay the Lilies and the Lion of the
Isles.

Well done, Nineteenth ! well fought of all ! brothers,
the story comes,
The proud praise of your generals is echoed in
your homes,

And well those homes shall welcome ye, whene'er
with conquering smiles
Ye bring us back the Lilies and the Lion of the
Isles.

Stand to it then, though storm and plague gave
horror to the fight,
God striketh hard for him whose sword is drawn
upon the right ;
Think this, and still, with steadfast will, rival the
earnest hands
Who heretofore as bravely bore the Banners of the
Lands.

Our dead sleep deeper : he whose sword Silistria's
safety won,
Who took the death upon his brow, and fell before
his gun.

Arnaud, and gallant Giffard, and the chief who
latest died

For the Lion and the Lily-flags, the Black Sea
wave beside.

No more the Hango slayers make their deed a
boast and brag,

Grimly they tell how many fell to wash that stained
white flag :

How that for every murdered man went down a
hundred files

Before the gay French Lilies, and the Lion of the
Isles.

For them and ye one Victory is won, and won
aright,

Hand joined in hand, land true to land, shall bring
us through the fight ;

On the flags that flaunt together the star of conquest smiles,—

Hurrah, for the golden Lilies and the Lion of the Isles!

But, hark! above her people's shout, silencing gun and drum,

Our good Queen's gracious words of thanks and pious prayer are come;

Bend low the knee, cry Victory!—her own fair-omened name;

But give unto the God of Hosts its glory and its fame.

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